

## Medical Facilities Offer Improved Health, Safety And Savings

(NAPSA)—The next time you or a loved one considers surgery or a serious medical procedure, you may be able to have it performed at a facility nationally recognized for delivering quality care and patient safety.

That's because programs such as Blue Distinction from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) help patients and their physicians identify institutions that lead the way in delivering quality outcomes while meeting the patients' direct needs. This designation is awarded to medical facilities that have demonstrated expertise in delivering quality health care.

A recent study conducted by HealthCore, Inc. confirmed the improved outcomes and value demonstrated by Blue Distinction Centers for Cardiac Care for several procedures, when compared with other hospitals. These included lower readmission rates and lower costs for procedures such as outpatient angioplasty and bypass surgery.

Blue Distinction Centers for Transplants also demonstrate highly successful patient outcomes according to a data analysis from the Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients at [www.ustransplant.org](http://www.ustransplant.org). Their one-year mortality rate for adult heart transplants is 11 percent, compared to 19 percent at other facilities.

"The Blue Distinction designation helps patients find health care facilities that will best meet their individual health care needs," explained Carole Flamm, M.D., BCBSA's executive medical director. "Importantly, it rewards physicians and hospitals for delivering quality care."

Patients treated at designated health care centers experienced better outcomes and greater value:

- 37 percent lower readmission rates for outpatient angioplasty (based on 30-day cardiac-related readmission rates)
- 26 percent lower readmission rates for bypass surgery (based on 30-day cardiac-related readmission rates)
- 12 percent lower costs for outpatient angioplasty (with a 90-day episode of care) <sup>Ⓜ</sup>

Today, more than 800 designations in the areas of bariatric surgery, cardiac care, complex and rare cancers and transplants have been awarded to facilities nationwide. Procedures in these areas affect more people than many realize. For example:

- Obesity is widely recognized as a contributor to serious health risks. According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the total number of Americans having weight-loss surgery more than quadrupled to 71,733 in just five years.

- The American Heart Association estimates that 1.2 million Americans will experience a heart attack this year alone.

- Complex and rare cancers comprise approximately 15 percent of new cancer cases each year.

- As of October 2008, more than 100,000 people in the United States were registered for organ donations with one of the nation's 800-plus transplant programs.

Additional facilities will soon be recognized for excellence in knee and hip replacement and spine surgery.

For more information, visit [www.bcbs.com/bluedistinction](http://www.bcbs.com/bluedistinction).