



For Immediate Release

August 1, 2013

Elaine St. Peter
Media Relations Manager
(860) 714-1076
estpeter@stfranciscare.org

**SAINT FRANCIS RECEIVES AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION'S
*GET WITH THE GUIDELINES-HEART FAILURE GOLD PLUS
QUALITY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD***

Award demonstrates Saint Francis' commitment to quality care for heart failure patients

(Hartford, CT, August 1, 2013) — Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center has received the *Get With The Guidelines*[®]–*Heart Failure Gold Plus Quality Achievement Award* from the American Heart Association. The recognition signifies that Saint Francis has reached an exceptional goal of treating heart failure patients according to the guidelines of care recommended by the American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology.

This marks the second consecutive year that Saint Francis has been recognized with the *Gold Plus* quality achievement award. Saint Francis is one of just three hospitals in Connecticut to receive *Gold Plus* recognition this year.

Get With The Guidelines–Heart Failure helps Saint Francis' staff develop and implement acute and secondary prevention guideline processes to improve patient care and outcomes. The program provides hospitals with a web-based patient management tool, best practice discharge protocols and standing orders, along with a robust registry and real-time benchmarking capabilities to track performance.

The quick and efficient use of guideline procedures can improve the quality of care for heart failure patients, save lives and ultimately reduce healthcare costs by lowering the recurrence of heart attacks.

“Recent studies show that patients treated in hospitals participating in the American Heart Association's *Get With The Guidelines-Heart Failure* program receive a higher quality of care and may experience better outcomes,” said Lee H. Schwamm, M.D., chair of the *Get With The Guidelines* National Steering Committee and director of the TeleStroke and Acute Stroke Services at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, MA. “The Saint Francis team is to be commended for their commitment to improving the care of their patients.”

Following *Get With The Guidelines–Heart Failure* treatment guidelines, heart failure patients are started on aggressive risk-reduction therapies if needed, including cholesterol-lowering drugs, beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors, aspirin, diuretics and anticoagulants while in the hospital. Before discharge, they also receive education on managing their heart failure and overall health, including lifestyle modifications and follow-up care. Hospitals must adhere to these measures at a set level for a designated period of time to be eligible for the achievement awards.

“We’re dedicated to making our care for heart failure patients among the best in the country. The American Heart Association’s *Get With The Guidelines–Heart Failure* program helps us to accomplish this goal,” said Daniel Diver, M.D., Chief of Cardiology, Saint Francis *Care*. “This recognition demonstrates that we continue to be on the right track and we’re very proud of our team for achieving this honor for the second year.”

“The full implementation of national heart failure guideline-recommended care is a critical step in preventing recurrent hospitalizations and prolonging the lives of heart failure patients,” said Richard Soucier, M.D., Director, Congestive Heart Failure Unit at Saint Francis.

According to the American Heart Association, about 5.7 million people suffer from heart failure. Statistics also show that, each year, 670,000 new cases are diagnosed and more than 277,000 people will die of heart failure. However, many heart failure patients can lead a full, enjoyable life when their condition is managed with proper medications and devices and with healthy lifestyle changes.

About Saint Francis *Care*

Saint Francis *Care* is an integrated healthcare delivery system established by Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, an anchor institution in north central Connecticut since 1897. Licensed for 617 beds and 65 bassinets, it is a major teaching hospital and the largest Catholic hospital in New England. Other major entities of Saint Francis *Care* include The Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital, the Connecticut Joint Replacement Institute, the Hoffman Heart and Vascular Institute of Connecticut, the Saint Francis/Mount Sinai Regional Cancer Center, the Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Center for Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Care and Neuroscience Research, and Saint Francis Health*Care* Partners. Johnson Memorial Medical Center, parent organization of Johnson Memorial Hospital, Evergreen Health Care Center, and Home and Community Health Services is also a Saint Francis *Care* Partner. Saint Francis *Care*’s services are supported by a network of five major Access Centers and eight additional medical office centers sited throughout the region. For more information, visit www.stfranciscare.com.

About *Get With The Guidelines*

Get With The Guidelines[®] is the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association’s hospital-based quality improvement program that empowers healthcare teams to save lives and reduce healthcare costs by helping hospitals follow evidence-based guidelines and recommendations. For more information, visit heart.org/quality.