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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**COMMUNITY CANCER RESEARCH FOUNDATION STUDY PARTICIPATION  
HELPS CHANGE PATIENT CARE/EXPAND MEDICARE COVERAGE**

**MUNSTER** – Through participation in a nationwide study conducted by the National Oncologic PET Registry (NOPR), Community Cancer Research Foundation has helped illustrate the importance of positron emission tomography (PET) scans in the diagnosis, staging and monitoring of cancer. As a result, the Centers of Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently has issued a final national coverage determination (NCD) to expand coverage for initial PET testing for Medicare beneficiaries who are diagnosed with and treated for most solid tumor cancers.

PET, available at the Community Diagnostic Center in Munster, has been found to be a useful test in helping doctors detect cancer and manage it properly. PET imaging or PET scan is a test that captures the function of cells to show differences between healthy tissue and diseased tissue.

Since 2005, Medicare coverage of PET scans for diagnosing some forms of cancer and guiding treatment has been tied to a requirement that providers collect clinical information about how the scans have affected doctor's treatment decisions. This information was gathered through the NOPR observational study. Patients at the hospitals of Community Healthcare System were provided access to the study through the joint efforts of the Community Cancer Research Foundation and the Community Healthcare System Radiology Department. The Foundation links area patients with research sponsored by the National Cancer Institute and other major research cooperatives, like the NOPR, worldwide.

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PET scans combine a radioactive tracer with sugar that is injected into the bloodstream through IV. As the substance circulates through the body, it is picked up and incorporated into the body's cells. The PET scanner picks up the signals emitted from the tracer and the computer generates images of the cells and how they are functioning. Because the test shows how the body's cells are working, it provides physicians with information about where the cancer is located, if it has spread and size of the tumor. It also can help doctors determine how effective chemotherapy and radiation have been in reducing tumors or even eliminating them.

Analysis of the data collected through the NOPR observational study found that in some 36.5% of the cases, a PET scan resulted in a change in the decision of whether or how to treat a patient's cancer. And, approximately three-quarters of the patients who had PET scans did not need to have a surgical biopsy of those who were originally scheduled for one.

This latest CMS decision removes the requirement to report data to the NOPR when a PET scan is used to support initial treatment (or diagnosis and "staging") of most solid tumor cancers. It also expands coverage of PET scans for subsequent follow up testing in beneficiaries who have cervical or ovarian cancer, or who are being treated for myeloma, a cancer that affects white blood cells. For these cancers, NOPR data collection also is no longer a requirement.

The Community Cancer Research Foundation has been working over the past 10 years to improve access area cancer patients have to treatments available through clinical research. Through trials sponsored by the Foundation, local patients have been among the first to benefit from treatments that have helped to improve survival, and are less invasive. The Foundation sponsors research trials at the three hospitals of the Community Healthcare System: Community Hospital in Munster; St. Catherine Hospital in East Chicago; and St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart.

A part of the Community Healthcare System, the Foundation helps support the area's largest cancer treatment and research programs with its established links to the national Cancer Institute and major research cooperatives around the globe. More than 30 trials are available, offering local patients access to treatments for breast, lung, ovarian and colon cancers, lymphoma, adult leukemia and multiple myeloma.

More information about the types of cancers covered by this new policy is available in CMS' final decision memorandum. The final decision is available to view on the CMS web site at [www.cms.hhs.gov/mcd/viewdecisionmemo.asp?id=218](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mcd/viewdecisionmemo.asp?id=218).