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Healthy Memphis Common Table Launches
Project Better Care to Improve Care of Shelby County Diabetics

October 17, 2011 (Memphis, TN)--October marks the official launch of Healthy Memphis Common Table’s (HMCT) new ambulatory improvement initiative, Project Better Care. This grass roots program seeks to provide improved care for the astronomical number of diabetics in Memphis and Shelby County by engaging primary care practices, health plans, and physician-hospital organizations in a series of proven treatment modules and shared educational opportunities. This is a partnership between Healthy Memphis Common Table, Memphis Medical Society, and Bluff City Medical Society.

Project Better Care will ultimately target diabetes, cardiac disease and pediatric asthma. However, HMCT has chosen to address diabetes first. According to Patti Tosti, HMCT’s Aligning Forces for Quality Project Manager, this type of work could create a blueprint for the most effective way to treat chronic illnesses, such as diabetes. “We estimate that there are 110,000 diabetics in Shelby County. This is a huge percentage of the population, and we believe that by taking strategic measures to examine and improve the care being offered by local physicians, while encouraging patient self-management, we can prevent those numbers from continuing to escalate,” says Tosti. “Physicians have the opportunity to access proven techniques for treating diabetes and share their individual knowledge of what works and what doesn’t. Most of the public is unaware that this is a crisis and it needs to be addressed differently than it has been in the past.”

Through the use of innovative tools, and existing resources, HMCT hopes to not only improve the management of care for chronic care patients but reduce unnecessary emergency room visits that could result in preventable hospitalizations. “Because many patients are not taking care of themselves properly, they end up experiencing life-threatening health situations and going to the ER. If we teach them how to develop a better relationship with their primary care providers and how to better self-manage their disease through exercise, nutrition and possibly medication it would reduce those visits and may ultimately help reduce the cost of health care in our community,” says Tosti.

Project Better Care currently has six primary care practices enrolled. Their target goal is ten. Practices that participate will receive increased support with their patients. This includes providing an ambulatory quality
improvement coordinator and care manager to work directly with them to enhance their delivery of care. This project was initiated as part of Healthy Memphis Common Table’s Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) project and is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Primary care practices, located in Memphis and Shelby County, that are interested in better care and outcomes for their patients are eligible to participate. Physicians who would like more information, are encouraged to contact Carol Adams of Healthy Memphis Common Table at 901. (insert number) or carol.adams@healthymemphis.org.

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**About the Healthy Memphis Common Table**

Healthy Memphis Common Table (HMCT), founded in 2003, is a non-profit coalition of community partners, agencies, churches, schools, individuals, governments and businesses working together to improve the health of everyone in Greater Memphis. HMCT initiatives include reducing obesity and diabetes, reducing disparities in health care and educating patients about quality care. For more information, visit [www.healthymemphis.org](http://www.healthymemphis.org).