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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Crestwood Enhances Care for Older Adults

Huntsville, AL - Crestwood Medical Center recently received certification as a NICHE (Nurses Improving Care for Health-System Elders) site, a national program to improve care for older hospitalized adults. Through this program Crestwood will undertake a number of steps to recognize and prevent or treat health problems specific to elders with a dedicated ACE (Acute Care for the Elderly) Inpatient Unit.

"The implementation of our ACE unit provides seniors with a smooth and seamless admission process, continuity of care, formally trained staff in geriatrics and a smooth transition back into their home environment," said Martha Walls, RN, Chief Nursing Officer at Crestwood. "By providing senior education throughout the hospital, we will enhance nursing care and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills regarding treatment of common syndromes experienced by older adults, improve care, and maximize the functional outcomes of our seniors."

In 1994 the John A. Hartford Foundation Institute for Geriatric Nursing, based at New York University, launched the NICHE program to help hospitals improve their methods of caring for older adults. NICHE is now being implemented in more than 270 hospitals nationwide. NICHE was created in recognition of three converging trends: the aging of the population of hospital patients, the ongoing national nursing shortage, especially in geriatric-trained nurses; and the need for hospitals to contain costs while improving patients' health care experience.

"Nationally, more than half of all hospitalized patients are over 65, yet only 1 percent of nurses are certified in gerontological nursing," said Walls. "By joining NICHE, we expect to significantly advance our understanding of the needs of our older patients. We have many nurses who are passionate about Geriatric Care. Those nurses will receive additional education and training as Geriatric Resource Nurses."

Recognizing the national scarcity of geriatric-trained nurses, NICHE aims to improve care of older people by improving approaches to some core clinical issues such as falls, restraint use, pain, skin breakdown and wounds, use of advance directives, and family involvement in decision-making. Additionally, NICHE aims to make the physical and social environment friendlier to the older adult patient.

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