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CRICO STRATEGIES' REPORT ON MALPRACTICE ERRORS IN OBSTETRICAL CARE PROVIDES ROADMAP FOR ENHANCED PATIENT SAFETY

Second Annual Benchmarking Report Uses Malpractice Data to Identify Risks and Deliver Solutions

CAMBRIDGE, MA –June XX, 2011 – **Errors in clinical judgment** were cited in 77 percent of more than 800 clinically coded obstetrical (OB) medical malpractice cases analyzed in a recent study by CRICO Strategies. These findings have been published in a report entitled, “2010 Annual Benchmarking Report: *Malpractice Risks in Obstetrics*.”

The report identifies that the next most prevalent areas of causation were: miscommunication (36 percent), technical error (26 percent), inadequate documentation (26 percent), administrative failures (23 percent), and ineffective supervision (15 percent). This landmark analytical report is based on data from OB-related malpractice cases asserted from 2005 to 2009. The cases were mined from CRICO Strategies' Comparative Benchmarking System (CBS), which contains more than 120,000 clinically coded medical malpractice claims, the largest of its kind in the world.

The study revealed that the top three most common OB risks or allegations are:

1. Delay in treatment of fetal distress
2. Improper performance of vaginal delivery
3. Improper management of pregnancy

The benchmark report illustrates how OB malpractice issues are rarely the result of a single act or omission by a single clinician. Rather, they typically reflect a series of missteps and mishandled decisions by a team of physicians and nurses who converge too

late to recover a rapidly devolving crisis. Understanding the critical decision points that can drive these scenarios is the first step in preventing their occurrence.

“Obstetrics has some unique vulnerabilities, most often involving situations in which a sequence of errors or oversights cascade into a crisis that can put mother and baby in jeopardy,” said Robert Hanscom, Senior Vice President, CRICO Strategies. “Because there is rarely that standout ‘single event,’ it is absolutely paramount that OB practices understand how these missteps unfold, and then focus on education and training initiatives designed specifically to help clinicians avert those mistakes. This report reveals why, where, and how mistakes happen, providing insight into the areas of risks and the best practices to mitigate them.”

In addition to offering a deep exploration of the most prominent obstetrical risks, the report highlights examples of their client and partner organizations leveraging Strategies’ coding and analytical process to develop interventions targeting their most critical obstetrical risks. By combining identified risk areas with proven safety solutions, the Report provides a roadmap to organizations seeking to improve obstetric care for their patients, while reducing risks and potential financial losses.

While the rate of OB claims is relatively infrequent (less than one case per 1,000 births), the report states the average malpractice payment is approximately \$947,000; more than twice that of other clinical areas, and second only to surgery in total indemnity payments.

“Malpractice Risks in Obstetrics” will be widely distributed to CRICO Strategies partners to help them identify malpractice risks and deploy patient safety initiatives. It will also be available to the greater community of health care organizations seeking to reduce medical errors and enhance patient safety. To obtain hard copies of the report, or for more information about the CBS database and Strategies services and products, contact: Gretchen Ruoff, MPH, CPHRM 617.679.1312 or gruoff@rmf.harvard.edu.

About CRICO Strategies:

CRICO Strategies is a division of CRICO that provides evidence-based risk management software solutions and services to an international membership of health care systems, hospitals, and insurers representing 400 hospitals, and 40,000 physicians. Strategies offers proven methodologies and data driven insights that reveal hidden areas of risk and deliver actionable intelligence to drive fundamental change that transforms the safety of patient care. By promoting an informed dialogue among a community of peers, Strategies is an industry leader in patient safety. CRICO is the patient safety and medical malpractice insurance company owned by and serving the Harvard medical community since 1976. For more information, visit www.rmfsstrategies.com.

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