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**For Immediate Release**

**Top U.S. Hospitals Rate Major Managed Care Companies  
Study shows UnitedHealthcare at the bottom of the rankings**

SANTA BARBARA, CALIF. — A recent study of 50 top healthcare provider organizations representing 405 hospitals nationwide revealed significant dissatisfaction with payor practices, personalities, and policies. UnitedHealthcare was rated the worst in the web-based study by those hospitals surveyed in the first DAVIES National Health Plan Study.

The first-of-its-kind study was conducted in late April and early May of this year revealing that 70% of respondents rated UnitedHealthcare (UHC) as having the worst reputation for dealing with hospitals and physicians. The next lowest-ranked payor was WellPoint/Anthem, with 10% of respondents rating them as having the worst reputation. Rounding out the leading performers were state and regional Blue Cross Blue Shield plans, with 40% of respondents saying they had the best reputation when dealing with physicians and hospitals.

Findings from this study coincide with recent surveys by J.D. Powers, which ranked the nation's major managed care companies in their performance on customer service. Another survey of physician claims data and physician perceptions was recently announced by Athenahealth, which ranked managed care companies for their performance paying physician claims with regard to timeliness, accuracy, and fixing improperly processed claims.

In the J.D. Powers and Associates 2007 National Health Insurance Plan Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup>, more than 10,000 members of 49 large commercial health plan companies in four U.S. Census regions rated major managed care companies in a number of areas, including coverage and benefits, choice of physicians, hospitals, and pharmacies, customer service, and claims processing, among others. UHC was rated below average in three out of the four regions, and just three points above average in the other region.

The Athenahealth and Physician Practice Journal PayerView<sup>SM</sup> Rankings placed UHC last of the major payors in the amount of time it took to pay physician claims, taking an average of 38.3 days. Aetna, who topped the list, took an average of 9 days.

The DAVIES National Health Plan Study measured managed care companies by their behavior during contract negotiations, including honesty, candor, timeliness, and responsiveness. In the majority of the categories, UHC was ranked last by the providers.

In addition, United's representatives were ranked as the most difficult to deal with at the negotiating table. On a scale of 1 – 10, with 10 being the "easiest to deal with," UnitedHealthcare was rated 1.8, with the next worst-performing payors, WellPoint/Anthem and Aetna, receiving a rating of 4.13 and 5.49 respectively.

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“This study provides an important piece of the puzzle for employers considering different health plan options,” explained Brandon Edwards, president/COO of DAVIES and the firm’s healthcare practice leader. “Employee satisfaction with health plans is based on choice of hospitals and physicians, and employers can learn a lot from looking at what hospitals have to say about their managed care partner.”

For example, when hospitals were asked to rank their satisfaction levels with their managed care partners this survey clearly demonstrates that UnitedHealthcare was ranked far below average with a score of 1.84 as compared to the next two lowest ranked companies, WellPoint/Anthem with a slightly below average score of 4.50 and Coventry/First Health with a slightly above average score of 5.59.

“UnitedHealthcare is the second largest managed care company in the nation providing more than 70 million Americans with access to insurance. Such size brings with it many obligations, including the responsibility to value the needs of its consumers over the demands of its shareholders,” Edwards continued. “Yet, results of recent surveys has shown from every perspective – physicians, hospitals, and customers – that UnitedHealthcare does not value the well being of their members and physicians, but places their focus on profit and a rising share price.”

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