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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATION RECEIVES GRANT TO FUND PROJECT TO IMPROVE ADOPTION AND USE OF NEW MEDICAL DEVICES**

OAKLAND, Calif., May 22, 2006— The Integrated Healthcare Association (IHA) today announced receipt of a \$675,000 grant from the Blue Shield of California Foundation to launch a pilot project that will help healthcare providers select medical devices more efficiently.

IHA's two-year demonstration project in Southern California will focus on improving data collection, enhancing transparency of information, and establishing quality benchmarks for orthopedic and cardiac medical devices.

"There's a lack of information on the comparative value of most new and existing medical devices," said Bart Asner, M.D., CEO of Monarch HealthCare, a prominent Orange County physician organization, and an IHA board member. "Hospitals and doctors are often in the dark when trying to choose the most appropriate devices for their patients and make value-based buying decisions."

Building on its successful "Pay for Performance" program – which helps providers align financial incentives with improvements in the efficiency and quality of care – IHA will begin collecting data this fall on the use of medical devices from hospital systems and physician organizations. The project will identify ways that providers and health insurers can purchase these technologies more efficiently, assure high quality, and provide useful information about these products for payers and patients.

“Ultimately our goal is achieving superior quality, safety, and efficiency in the adoption and use of these devices,” said Tom Williams, executive director of IHA. “The project will build on IHA’s successful collaboration among hospitals, physician organizations, and health insurance plans.” Memorial HealthCare Medical Centers, representing six hospitals, and Monarch HealthCare IPA, representing 1900 physicians, have already agreed to participate, and several health plans have expressed interest in joining the project.

“The IHA project is important because more information and better incentives are needed to help providers make evidence-based decisions,” said Lisa Payne Simon, director of the Blue Shield of California Foundation’s health and technology program ([www.blueshieldcafoundation.org](http://www.blueshieldcafoundation.org)).

Widely used medical devices such as hip replacements and cardiac stents can be not only life-saving, but also expensive.

“Collaboration will drive this program’s success,” said Barry Arbuckle, Ph.D., president and CEO of MemorialCare Medical Centers and an IHA board member. “IHA’s project aims to improve quality and control spiraling health care costs by gathering the information needed to help providers more efficiently select the right products for the right patients,” he said. “When hospitals and doctors cooperate, consumers are the winners.”

### **About the Integrated Healthcare Association (IHA)**

*IHA ([www.ihc.org](http://www.ihc.org)) is a nonprofit statewide collaborative leadership group of California health plans, medical groups, and health care systems, plus academic, consumer, purchaser, pharmaceutical, and technology representatives. By engaging the various sectors of healthcare delivery in dialogue and collective action, IHA promotes breakthrough quality improvement, accountability, and affordability of healthcare for all Californians.*

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