

**For Immediate Release**

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**Northwest Medical Center and Paul Wizman, M.D. receive designation as a Center of Excellence for Bariatric Surgery By the American Society for Bariatric Surgery**

**Margate, FL. – December 11, 2006** - Northwest Medical Center, along with its Medical Director for Bariatric Surgery, Dr. Paul Wizman, has been designated by the American Society for Bariatric Surgery (ASBS) Surgical Review Corporation as a Center of Excellence for Bariatric Surgery.

Obesity is one of America's most serious epidemics. Over two thirds of US citizens are overweight. Of even greater concern, over 23 million Americans are morbidly obese, which means that they have a Body Mass Index (BMI) greater than 40, exceeding their ideal body weight by at least 100 pounds.

This prestigious designation is granted to institutions who have demonstrated required resources to perform safe bariatric surgery, and have excellent short and long-term outcomes. These indices, therefore, not only document process, i.e. equipment, supplies, training of surgeons, and the availability of consultant services, but emphasize results. Application for designation as an ASBS Bariatric Surgery Center of Excellence is voluntary.

The main benefits of being a Center of Excellence for Bariatric Surgery are, among others, patient safety and advocacy, continuous improvement of bariatric surgery through comparisons of patient selection, operative procedures, and care paths.

The Surgical Review Corporation (SRC) is a non-profit corporation. The SRC's Bariatric Surgery Review Committee, consisting exclusively of bariatric surgeons, assesses applicants to the Bariatric Surgery Centers of Excellence program and helps formulate requirement and guidelines. The Research Advisory Committee oversees the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data. SRC's Strategic Alliances Group brings together patient groups, providers, payors and other industry stakeholders in an effort to improve outcomes and provide patient, provider and payor value.

Bariatric surgery is a complex and challenging undertaking. Many of the patients present sharply increased surgical risks. Psycho-social challenges and the uncontrolled complications of morbid obesity require highly competent and compassionate support. Furniture, hospital equipment, instruments and imaging resources must be suitable to deal with massive patients who often exceed their ideal body weight by 100 pounds. Especially important is a well-trained staff, capable of dealing with the physical and emotional demands of the morbidly obese.

**Northwest Medical Center**, an HCA hospital located in Margate, Florida, is a 215-bed medical center and healthcare complex, continuously expanding and bringing on the latest technology. Staffed by nearly 600 physicians and 800 healthcare professionals, Northwest Medical Center prides itself in providing state-of-the art services to the population it serves.

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