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SMH Teams up with Aneurysm Outreach for free Screening event *Free ultrasounds offered March 27 to screen for abdominal aneurysms*

(Slidell, La.—March 10, 2010)—Slidell Memorial Hospital (SMH) has teamed up with Aneurysm Outreach, Inc. and Drs. Fidel Sendra, Cardiothoracic Surgeon, and David B. Kaplan, Vascular Surgeon, to offer a free abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening to qualified participants. This community outreach event takes place from 8 a.m. to Noon, **Saturday, March 27** at SMH, 1001 Gause Blvd. Because AAA screening is recommended only once every 5-6 years for those older than 60 in the general population or those older than 55 with a family history of AAA, participants must pre-qualify and schedule an appointment. The number to call is (985) 649-8585.

AAAs can be diagnosed with ultrasonography. Ultrasound has about a 98% accuracy rate in measuring the size of an aneurysm. Participants are asked not to eat or drink anything for eight hours prior to their scheduled appointments. Additional information is available at www.SMHAAA.org.

An abdominal aortic aneurysm is an abnormal ballooning of the abdominal portion of the aorta, which is the major artery from the heart. Much like a weak spot in a worn tire bulges, AAA causes an increasing bulge in the wall of the aorta, which can rupture if not detected and treated. Ninety percent of ruptured AAAs are fatal. Treatment options include traditional surgery as well as minimally invasive procedures with stent grafts.

The exact cause of AAA is not known, but risk factors include family history, hypertension, smoking (smokers have an almost eight times higher risk than non-smokers), hardening of the arteries and age over 60. Men are nearly five times more likely than women to suffer the condition and AAA is 3.5 times more common in Caucasian men than in African-American males. About 25 percent of cases are those with a first degree relative with AAA.

Patients sometimes detect an aneurysm by feeling a pulsating mass in the abdomen, or it may be found by their physician during a routine physical examination; however, most AAAs are asymptomatic and can rupture without warning. It is estimated that half of all people with untreated abdominal aortic aneurysms die of rupture within five years. AAAs are the 13th leading cause of death in the United States and the third leading cause of sudden death in men.

“Because this condition isn’t screened regularly, this is an important opportunity to raise awareness of the potential threat facing adults in our community, and in particular those with a family history of AAA,” said Bob Hawley, SMH chief executive officer.

ABOUT ANEURYSM OUTREACH

Aneurysm Outreach, Inc. (<http://www.alink.org/>) is a nonprofit organization based in Prairieville that is dedicated to mobilizing people and resources to eradicate aneurysms. It has conducted free community screenings throughout Louisiana since 2001.

ABOUT SMH

Slidell Memorial Hospital is a full-service 182-bed acute care not-for-profit community hospital located at 1001 Gause Blvd., in the heart of Slidell. Founded in 1959, SMH is the third-largest employer in St. Tammany Parish, employing 1,100 full, part-time and pool employees. SMH serves as a primary healthcare resource for families in St. Tammany Parish, La.; Pearl River County, Miss.; and the greater Mississippi Gulf Coast region. It is located online at <http://www.slidellmemorial.org>.

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