



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CLINIC'S INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO CARING FOR
CHRONICALLY ILL CHILDREN YIELDS BETTER PATIENT OUTCOMES**
Pediatric Health Clinic Launches First-Of-Its-Kind Chronic Care Medical Home

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – April 1, 2009 – On any given day, the waiting room at Franklin, Tenn.-based Mercy Children's Clinic is bursting at the seams with sick children and their worried parents. This inviting place where no child is turned away regardless of their parents' ability to pay, is welcoming hundreds of children throughout middle Tennessee who suffer from complex medical conditions.

Why would a nonprofit clinic that sees an average of 100 new patients per month and relies heavily on donations and grants to keep their doors open invite the sickest of the sick to seek their care here? Their mission is "to reflect the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by providing healthcare services to all children and support to their families." They truly want to offer care to all children – those with and without insurance, and those who have chronic illnesses as well as those who are healthy.

Responding to the tremendous need for care coordination for children with chronic illnesses, Mercy Children's Clinic made a bold and innovative move recently as they launched their groundbreaking Medical Home for Chronic Care. Chronically ill children are often hospitalized, see several specialists, and often require multiple daily medications, so it's even more critical to have a medical home overseeing the care of these children.

The program, which has already garnered national attention for its innovative approach, connects a team of physicians, specialists, and mental health providers to ensure proper management of children with chronic illnesses. Mercy's dedicated team includes a psychiatrist, pediatricians, and multiple on-site ancillary services.

"Approximately 50 percent of our patients and families at Mercy are living with chronic illness," said Amy Vehec, M.D. "Integrating all of the medical issues into a

comprehensive care plan can be complicated and requires a team that is committed to working together to achieve the best possible outcomes.”

The team at Mercy is uniquely suited to offering this groundbreaking service because of their philosophy of never turning a child away for inability to pay. Because they care for children from all socio-economic backgrounds, they are able to provide the same quality of care to all children with chronic illness, not only those with insurance. The physicians at Mercy Children’s Clinic are willing and able to take the time required to care for these children in their office, which minimizes unnecessary emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Rebecca*, the mother of a chronically ill child, equates managing his care to the work that a general contractor does on a job site. She states, “He has been on as many as 14 different medications at one time. Having his care focused in one place, monitored by someone who knows his history, prevents mistakes and limits the adverse reactions from medications that are prescribed by different people.”

Mercy Children’s Clinic has a staff of more than 40, including eight pediatricians and a psychiatrist. They serve families from 27 middle-Tennessee counties. Approximately 25 percent of Mercy’s patients have private health insurance while the rest are either uninsured or participate in TennCare/Medicaid. With the number of uninsured children rising and the tremendous need for the management of chronically ill patients, Mercy Children’s Clinic constantly evaluates the community need and is looking at expanding the program into other counties.

** The patient and his mother’s name have been changed to respect their privacy.*

About Mercy Children’s Clinic

Mercy Children's Clinic is a Franklin, Tenn.-based nonprofit organization that provides primary pediatric and mental healthcare to children from all socio-economic backgrounds including children without health insurance or enrolled in TennCare. Since 1999 more than 8,000 children from 24 Middle Tennessee counties have called Mercy Children's Clinic their medical home. For additional information visit www.MercyChildrensClinic.org or call 615.790.0567.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Amy Gray, APR
Gray Public Relations
615.497.1799
agray@graypr.com

Jessica Perry
Community Relations Specialist
Mercy Children's Clinic
615.804.6397
Jessica@MercyChildrensClinic.org

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