The Joint Commission and American Heart Association
Announce Enhanced Certification Alliance

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Ill. – October 5, 2011) The Joint Commission and the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association are enhancing their alliance, originally formed in 2003, to help organizations provide more comprehensive and appropriate care for patients at Certified Primary Stroke Centers and Heart Failure Programs nationwide.

This enhanced alliance combines the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association’s scientific expertise with The Joint Commission’s 60 years of experience in evaluating the quality and safety of care in health care organizations. Beginning February 1, 2012, Certified Primary Stroke Centers and Heart Failure Programs can use designated seals from The Joint Commission and American Heart Association/American Stroke Association to signify that they are providing the “next generation of stroke or heart failure care.”

Primary Stroke Centers will be highlighted on the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association’s “Stroke Care Near You” website to assist the general public with locating stroke centers that meet criteria of the association’s Get With The Guidelines® quality improvement programs. Special recognition will also be awarded for certified Primary Stroke Centers at the annual International Stroke Conference. Benefits of the enhanced alliance include:

- Patients can easily recognize the hospitals providing state-of-the-art stroke and heart failure care.
- One destination for sharing stroke and heart failure care information with a clearinghouse of tools and best practices.
• A coordinated set of support services that facilitate the provision of excellent primary stroke and heart failure care through online virtual networking.

• Future integration of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association’s Get With The Guidelines and The Joint Commission’s Certification Measure Information Process (CMIP) measurement system.

• Trend reports that give Joint Commission certified Primary Stroke Centers and organizations with Advanced Certification in Heart Failure the ability to view their program’s performance on stroke and heart failure standardized measures.

• Increased recognition by the public of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association and The Joint Commission’s Certified Primary Stroke Centers and Heart Failure Programs.

“The enhanced alliance brings added value and a new level of recognition to stroke and heart failure certification,” says Mark R. Chassin, M.D., FACP, M.P.P., M.P.H., president, The Joint Commission. “We are excited about strengthening our alliance with the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association to provide patients and organizations more tools to improve patient safety and to recognize the organizations that are doing so. More importantly, it illustrates that these programs are practicing and providing the next generation of stroke and heart failure care to their patients.”

“We are pleased to take this next step in building on the success of the Get With The Guidelines program and its well-documented, proven track record of improving patient care and outcomes, improving provider performance and eliminating disparity gaps,” says Gordon Tomaselli, M.D., president of the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. “By achieving these advanced certifications in heart failure and stroke, healthcare providers will demonstrate their commitment to consistently delivering reliable, effective and high quality care to their patients.”

For more information about Primary Stroke Center Certification or Advanced Certification in Heart Failure, please call 630.792.5291 or e-mail dscinfo@jointcommission.org.

###

**About The Joint Commission:**

Founded in 1951, The Joint Commission seeks to continuously improve health care for the public, in collaboration with other stakeholders, by evaluating health care organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value. The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits more than 19,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States, including more than 10,300 hospitals and home care organizations, and more than 6,500 other health care organizations that provide long term care, behavioral health care, laboratory and ambulatory care services. The Joint Commission also provides certification of more than 2,000 disease-specific care programs, primary stroke centers, and health care staffing services. An independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation’s oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Learn more about The Joint Commission at www.jointcommission.org.

**About the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association:**
The American Heart Association is devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – America's No. 1 and No. 3 killers. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies, and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The Dallas-based association is the nation's oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. To learn more or to get involved, call 1-800-AHA-USA1, visit heart.org or call any of our offices around the country.