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**Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Georgia Expands
Breast Cancer Care Program**

ATLANTA – October 28, 2008 – As October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, draws to a close, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Georgia (BCBSGa) understands that it is truly a year-round effort, and is taking additional steps to further improve breast cancer care and awareness for its members. The BCBSGa Breast Cancer Care Program, designed for patients with breast cancer and their physicians, has helped more than 16,000 Georgians navigate through the emotional hardship experienced when undergoing treatment/care for breast cancer.

The goals of this quality improvement program are:

- To improve breast cancer care and to provide awareness and targeted interventions that will promote informed decision making through meaningful discussions between the patient and the health care team
- To improve appropriate treatment selections consistent with accepted standards of care and best practice guidelines
- To provide frontline support to patients with breast cancer.

“It is a wonderful surprise, and a great feeling, to know my insurance company cares,” noted Jenifer Hinkemeyer, BCBSGa member. “The program includes useful resources that helped me understand and cope with my diagnosis and treatment.”

“When we developed the program, we formed two advisory panels, one of physicians and one of survivors and support organization leaders, to ensure we would provide the most beneficial program for all audiences,” said Sandra White, M.D., medical director, BCBSGa. “We identified the most salient messages for each audience in order to ensure the information provided would be well-received and informative. Materials were developed and the program rollout began. We are thrilled with the response thus far and are continuing to expand materials and outreach.”

With feedback from the advisory panels, BCBSGa created four new collateral pieces. The materials address the various needs of breast cancer patients at different stages of their cancer journey. “These pieces are designed to provide comprehensive information to support informed decision-making, delivered in a simple, clearly stated manner – suitable for a diverse audience,” said Dr. White.

The program materials include:

- [BCBSGa Resource List](#) - offers support and additional helpful resources to breast cancer patients and their caregivers.
- [BCBSGa Patient Educational Book](#) – contains information on many topics related to breast cancer. This booklet is designed to help patients with breast cancer understand and cope with their disease.

- BCBSGa Patient Checklist of Questions to Ask the Doctor – suggests questions for the patient to ask their doctors at each stage of treatment, helping patients arrive at the treatment decisions they are most comfortable with.
- BCBSGa General Treatment Guidelines for Breast Cancer – provides information on diagnosis staging of breast cancer and the related treatment decisions or options. This quick reference tool is designed for physicians who are not oncology specialists, to discuss breast cancer treatment options with their patients in general terms.

“We have received a great deal of positive feedback from our members and medical providers. We understand what a difficult and confusing time it can be when being diagnosed with or diagnosing breast cancer,” noted Dr. White. “Our goal is to ease the confusion and increase communications between the caregiver and the patient. We believe we are succeeding through this program.”

The program reaches all BCBSGa products - HMO/POS, PPO, and Indemnity. To date, educational materials have been distributed to more than 16,000 patients nationally, and more than 5,200 physicians at more than 7,800 office locations throughout Georgia. The program is expected to reach more than 3,500 patients annually.

In addition to individual requests for the materials, BCBSGa has collaborated with community and clinical organizations to distribute the program materials to their constituents, providing nearly 20,000 component pieces. Among others, the National Black Leadership Initiative on Cancer (NBLIC) partners and the Breast Health Connection of Georgia are including the BCBSGa tools within their community-based distribution networks throughout Georgia (reaching more than 600 breast cancer advocates annually). In addition, the Winship Cancer Institute at Emory University has selected the BCBSGa Patient Education Book as part of their patient support program and the staff of the Grady Health Clinic at the Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport is making program materials available for use in their health clinic activities.

BCBSGa is currently involved in a research project that will help BCBSGa identify additional educational needs and address possible disparities. BCBSGa is also researching how to achieve an effective transition of care from the cancer specialist back to the primary care physician for long-term follow-up with breast cancer survivors.

In addition to direct distribution, program materials are available for viewing and download on the BCBSGa Web site, www.bcbsga.com. For more information, please contact Nancy A. Rodriguez at 404-848-2334 or nancy.rodriquez@bcbsga.com

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