

University Physicians Hospital Earns Prestigious NICHE Designation as Senior-Friendly Hospital

May 3, 2011

From: Katie Riley, (520) 626-4828

TUCSON, Ariz. -- **University Physicians Hospital** has been certified as a NICHE facility, a “senior-friendly” hospital committed to meeting the special needs of hospitalized older adults.

University Physicians Hospital is the only hospital in Arizona to earn the prestigious designation from the Hartford Institute of Geriatric Nursing, and it is a critical step in the hospital’s vision to become Arizona’s leader in comprehensive geriatric hospital services, said **Jean Fedigan, RN, BSN, MBA**, the hospital’s chief nursing officer.

Fedigan said the NICHE (Nursing Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders) designation is the result of strong collaboration between University Physicians Hospital and the **University of Arizona Center on Aging**, and was made possible through funding from the **Arizona Geriatric Education Center**.

The intensive path to achieve certification began in January with a NICHE leadership training program led by Fedigan, **Maureen Delage, RN**, and **Elena Moreno, RN**, with strong support from hospital administrators **Diane Rafferty, Sarah Frost** and **Brett Behan**. Arizona Geriatric Education Center Co-Directors **Mindy Fain, MD**, and **Jane Mohler, RN, MPH, PhD**, provided guidance and geriatric expertise, and \$5,000 funding for training of NICHE scholars.

As a NICHE hospital, University Physicians Hospital will implement a nationally recognized training program designed to bring the most current knowledge and skills in geriatric patient care to bedside nurses and hospital staff. The hospital will adopt clinical best practices for common and serious issues among hospitalized older adults – vision and hearing loss, medication problems, insomnia, falls and memory loss, for example – that often complicate their recovery.

The goal is to provide safe and quality care for seniors and achieve high patient, family and staff satisfaction. An exciting spin-off of this process is the identification of the need for an Acute Care of Elders (ACE) Unit at the hospital to prevent functional decline among frail adults; planning for this specialized unit is in progress.

University Physicians Hospital proudly joins the national family of NICHE hospitals, dedicated to providing all older hospitalized patients with sensitive and exemplary care. “With our rapidly aging population, and the special needs of hospitalized seniors, the NICHE designation comes at just the right time for our community and for all of Southern Arizona,” Fedigan said.

#

UPH is a nonprofit corporation created in 1985 as the medical practice of the physicians of the University of Arizona College of Medicine. Together, UPH, the UA, UPH Hospital and University Medical Center combine to care for patients, educate medical students, train young physicians and conduct clinical research. With more than 400 physicians and 2,000 staff, UPH is Arizona’s largest physicians group.