

TO MEDIA

CONTACT:

Tom Chakurda
Chief Marketing and Communications Officer
thomas.chakurda@independence.health
412-508-6816 CELL

Melissa Forster
Marketing & Communications Specialist
melissa.forster@independence.health
814-490-6057 CELL

Robin Jennings
robin.jennings@independence.health
724-516-4483 CELL

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INDEPENDENCE HEALTH SYSTEM LUNG CANCER PROGRAM CONTINUES PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR QUALITY

Three-Star Rating Highest Honor from Society of Thoracic Surgeons

GREENSBURG, PA, June 16, 2024 ... The thoracic surgical group of Independence Health System-Westmoreland Area has once again earned a distinguished three-star rating from The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) for patient care and lung cancer resection outcomes. The three-star rating, which denotes the highest category of quality, places the program among the elite for general thoracic surgery in the United States and Canada.

The current honor is based on quality outcomes when performing pulmonary resection for primary lung cancer. The Independence Health System program is one of only 24 of the 220 participating sites to receive three stars. This recognition represents a new cohort for STS, and is not yet publicly available. The health system's thoracic surgeons are also rated in the areas of lobectomy and esophagectomy and perform as expected in these areas when compared to peer organizations, with each carrying a

two-star rating. The GTSD Composite Quality Ratings are based on a three-year analytic period. The most recent analysis includes surgery dates from January 2021 through December 2023. STS analyzes and assigns star ratings for three-year periods every six months.

During a pulmonary or lung resection, Independence Health System thoracic surgeons remove a portion of the lung that is damaged or diseased. In some cases, providers also use a lung resection to diagnose lung conditions which can be done by examining the tissue more closely to understand the cause of a lung problem. At Independence Health System, surgeons perform the lung resection using a surgical robot and specialized instruments to create the small incisions that are typical of a minimally invasive surgery. The procedure means less anesthesia, less pain and faster recovery times for the patient.

The STS star rating system is one of the most sophisticated and highly regarded overall measures of quality in health care, rating the benchmarked outcomes of cardiothoracic surgery programs in the United States and Canada. The STS National Database is the gold standard for CT surgery clinical outcomes registries, with nationally recognized quality performance measures for adult cardiac, general thoracic, congenital heart surgery, and mechanical circulatory support.

Independence Health System thoracic surgeons Michael Szwerc, MD, FACS and Brian Lace, MD, participate in the STS General Thoracic Surgery Database (GTSD). The star ratings are derived by testing whether the participant's composite or domain score is significantly different from the overall STS average when performed by GTSD participants. STS General Thoracic Surgery Public Reporting offers a comparison of GTSD and national outcomes, demonstrating the high performance of GTSD participants.

“Participation in the Database and public reporting demonstrates our health system’s commitment to quality at every level of care delivery,” noted Dr. Szwerc, medical director of Independence Health’s Center for Thoracic and Lung Disease. “We want patients and their families to have meaningful information to help them make informed decisions about their care and to ensure their confidence in our ability to provide that care.”

The STS National Database was established in 1989 as an initiative for quality improvement and patient safety among cardiothoracic surgeons. The Database includes four components: the Adult Cardiac Surgery Database (ACSD), the Congenital Heart Surgery Database (CHSD), the GTSD, and the mechanical circulatory support database (Intermacs). The STS General Thoracic Surgery Database (GTSD) is the largest and most robust clinical thoracic surgical database in the North America. The GTSD contains more than 700,000 general thoracic surgery procedure records and currently has more than 1,000 participating surgeons. Almost 35% of GTSD participants are currently enrolled in public reporting.

About STS

Founded in 1964, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) is a not-for-profit organization that represents more than 7,700 surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for surgeries of the heart, lung, and esophagus, as well as other surgical procedures within the chest. The Society's mission is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research, and advocacy.

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Nationally recognized for quality care, Independence Health System comprises Butler Memorial, Clarion, Frick, Latrobe and Westmoreland Hospitals with a combined bed count of 925. With more than 1,000 physicians and advanced practice providers and 7,300 employees, the System is now the third largest in western Pennsylvania serving a population base of 750,000 in a footprint spanning more than 10 counties.

The System includes tertiary programs that are rated among America's best for cardiac care and surgery by Healthgrades in its Top 100 designations. In similar fashion, the prestigious Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) bestowed its top three-star rating. Historically, less than 10 percent of programs within the STS data base achieve this elite standing. The hospitals of Independence Health System also have earned a host of accolades from such prestigious outlets and sources as US News and World Report, Newsweek Magazine, the American College of Radiology, the American College of Cardiology, the American College of Surgeons, the Joint Commission, Leapfrog and the American Heart/Stroke Association.

Locally owned and locally controlled, Independence Health System offers its patients low-cost, high-quality care across the care spectrum in such specialties as cardiology, cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, orthopedics and sports medicine, minimally invasive and robotic surgery, women's health and obstetrics, emergency medicine, behavioral health and primary care. Its network of outpatient centers sees more than 1.2 million visits annually. The homecare division further supports patients at all stages of life with home health and hospice services.

Independence Health System continues to change the healthcare landscape in western Pennsylvania

by meeting patient needs through superb physician expertise, outstanding nursing, the latest in technology and programmatic depth.