Survey Shows Increase In Bariatric Procedures, Related Costs

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(PRNewswire) According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 36 percent of U.S. adults and 17 percent of children and adolescents are obese, with these numbers projected to rise significantly by 2030. This alarming statistic not only affects our nation's health, but it also has a major economic impact on hospitals treating obese patients.

Novation, a leading healthcare supply chain contracting company, released its *2012 Bariatric Report*, which confirmed that while hospitals continue to see an increase in bariatric procedures, costs related to caring for morbidly obese patients continue to rise as well. Of the responding facilities, 74 percent saw an increase in the number of bariatric surgeries in the past 18 months. More than half of respondents also spent more on the treatment of morbidly obese patients in the last 12-18 months than they had in previous years.

"The member hospitals we serve have seen a continual rise in the costs of treating obese patients, while also facing the financial pressures of the economy, reduced reimbursement and changes under healthcare reform," said Cathy Denning, vice president, sourcing operations at Novation. "Because of this, it is more important than ever that we help them lower their supply costs and assist in providing high quality care. Currently, Novation offers a comprehensive portfolio of the most widely used bariatric products to provide support and value to member hospitals."

Other key report findings include:

- Sixty-one percent have seen an increase in the number of bariatric-related reconstructive surgeries in the last 18 months.
- The estimated cost of all expenses related to the treatment of morbidly obese patients ranged from $200 to as much as $5 million in the last 12-18 months. Beds account for the highest total costs and/or the greatest increase in bariatric product spending at member facilities.
- 36 percent indicate that they invested in the physical renovation for their facilities to accommodate morbidly obese patients in the past year. The estimated cost of all morbidly obese-related renovations ranged from $12,000 up to $4 million.

- 53 percent have a fitness program in their facilities, 60 percent have a weight loss program and 61 percent have a counseling program.

- In light of health care reform changes, the majority of respondents plan to enhance their obesity education and prevention programs. 56 percent will enhance the programs for patients, while 64 percent will enhance these programs for their own employees.

- When asked about workplace injuries related to caring for morbidly obese patients, 59 percent have seen a decrease in the past year. Of the 59 percent, 77 percent believe that it was due to purchasing specialized equipment for obese patients or offering training programs.

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