

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CheckMeds NC Program Served Over 21,000 Seniors in First Two Years

Services helped NC Seniors avoid over \$14 million in health care costs

Raleigh, NC – Just two years ago, on Oct. 25, 2007, the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) Commission and then-Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue, who chaired the HWTF at the time, launched a unique and innovative statewide program to provide Medication Therapy Management services for North Carolina seniors: *CheckMeds NC*. Since that launch two years ago, more than 21,000 NC seniors received Medication Therapy Management through *CheckMeds NC*, saving an estimated \$14.2 million in health care costs and avoiding countless health problems for those receiving services.

CheckMeds NC offers eligible seniors one-on-one consultations with pharmacists throughout the state to ensure that they are receiving the best information and advice about their medicines. North Carolina is the first state in the nation to launch such a service for its seniors.

“*CheckMeds NC* provides valuable and lifesaving services to North Carolina seniors,” said Governor Bev Perdue. “HWTF’s investment in *CheckMeds NC* has not only proved beneficial to the thousands of North Carolina seniors using the program whose health depends on managing their medications well, but the program has also saved the health care system millions of dollars by eliminating duplicative or contraindicated medications and reducing the chances of damaging drug interactions and the need for hospitalizations.”

Medication Therapy Management is offered to a limited number of NC seniors under the federal Medicare Part D legislation; however, prescription drug plans are neither required to provide it in a face-to-face setting, nor to use a pharmacist to conduct this in-depth counseling session. Prior to *CheckMeds NC*, most plans were attempting to provide this type of service via direct mail or over the phone using primarily non-pharmacists, which can greatly diminish its effectiveness. *CheckMeds NC* offers every NC senior the opportunity for an in-depth medication review with a specially trained pharmacist in their area. All North Carolina seniors ages 65 and older and enrolled in a Medicare prescription drug plan are eligible to receive this free service at participating pharmacies.

The HWTF Commission initially allocated \$2 million to fund the program. In June of this year, the HWTF commission allocated an additional \$2 million to extend the *CheckMeds NC* program for another two years through June 2011.

Pharmacists in both chain and independent pharmacies across the state were invited to take the free online training to become *CheckMeds NC* participating pharmacists, enabling them to be reimbursed for services they provide to eligible seniors. In response, 110 NC pharmacists completed the training and are providing *CheckMeds NC* services to seniors across the state.

Medication Therapy Management is a proven method of saving lives and reducing overall health care costs by reducing potentially harmful drug-to-drug interactions. Nationally, as many as 200,000 deaths and an estimated 16% of all hospital admissions are linked to medication-related problems.

In order to continue to gauge the efficacy of the *CheckMeds NC* program, HWTF has awarded a \$25,000 grant to The Carolinas Center for Medical Excellence (CCME) to evaluate the program. CCME is a nonprofit organization that has more than two decades of experience evaluating health care programs across a variety of settings.

For more information about *CheckMeds NC*, go to the website: www.checkmedsnc.com.

About the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$199 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.

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