



## **WellPoint Announces Collaborative Partnership to Expand Access to Health Care Provider Information; Initial partnership includes Blue plans in Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Washington**

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INDIANAPOLIS, Dec. 16 /PRNewswire/ -- WellPoint, Inc. (NYSE: WLP), the nation's largest health benefits company by medical membership, today announced plans to collaboratively partner with four Blue Cross and/or Blue Shield plans across the country to provide access to online, consumer-friendly health care cost information. The health plans participating with WellPoint in this initiative are Highmark Inc. (Pennsylvania), Premera Blue Cross (Washington), Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan. Through the partnership, these Blue plans will provide the total estimated cost ranges associated with 39 specific medical procedures performed at a local hospital, outpatient surgery center, free-standing radiology facility or other medical facility.

"An essential step in transforming consumers' role in their own health care decisions is to provide access to clear information about health care cost and quality," said Angela F. Braly, president and CEO, WellPoint, Inc. "Our goal is always to work collectively with other Blue plans to enhance the offerings and programs available throughout the country."

Ranges of health care cost information will initially be rolled out on a limited basis in each of these states. The estimated cost ranges provided through this partnership are based on combining related services typically performed at each facility at the time of the procedure, not just the procedure itself. In addition, the cost ranges are facility-specific so members can compare the differences in cost between area facilities.

The cost range information is based directly on each Blue plans' claims paid data over the past 12 months, providing consumers with access to more accurate and timely information about the cost associated with each of the 39 procedures. The data will be updated every six months.

"In late 2006, our affiliated health plan in Ohio piloted a cost transparency program in conjunction with General Motors," said Braly. "Based on the success and consumer satisfaction with that pilot, we are in the process of rolling out the program to WellPoint's affiliated health plans across the country. We are pleased to be working with other Blue plans so that even more members can have access to clear, concise health cost information in major cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Seattle, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Atlanta and Cincinnati, putting us on the road to a national solution for consumers."

This partnership is part of a transparency strategy that enables WellPoint's affiliated health plans and other Blue plans to build on their collaborative work with physicians and facilities to provide members with meaningful health care cost data. In turn, members can make more informed choices about their health and health care spending.

About WellPoint, Inc.:

WellPoint, Inc. is the largest health benefits company in terms of medical membership in the United States. WellPoint is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and serves its members as the Blue Cross licensee for California; the Blue Cross and Blue Shield licensee for Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Missouri (excluding 30 counties in the Kansas City area), Nevada, New Hampshire, New York (as the Blue Cross Blue Shield licensee in 10 New York City metropolitan and surrounding counties and as the Blue Cross or Blue Cross Blue Shield licensee in selected upstate counties only), Ohio, Virginia (excluding the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C.), Wisconsin; and through UniCare. Additional information about WellPoint is available at [www.wellpoint.com](http://www.wellpoint.com).

About Highmark Inc.

As one of the leading health insurers in Pennsylvania, Highmark Inc.'s mission is to provide access to affordable, quality health care enabling individuals to live longer, healthier lives. Based in Pittsburgh, Highmark serves 4.6 million people through the company's health care benefits business. Highmark contributes millions of dollars to help

keep quality health care programs affordable and to support community-based programs that work to improve people's health. Highmark exerts an enormous economic impact throughout Pennsylvania. A recent study states that Highmark's positive impact exceeded \$2.5 billion. The company provides the resources to give its members a greater hand in their health.

Highmark Inc. is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans. For more information, visit [www.highmark.com](http://www.highmark.com).

#### About Premera Blue Cross

Our mission is to provide peace of mind to our members about their health-care coverage. We provide health care coverage and related services to more than 1.5 million people. Premera Blue Cross has operated in Washington since 1933. Premera Blue Cross is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. Premera Blue Cross is a member of a family of companies based in Mountlake Terrace, Washington, that provide health, life, vision, dental, and long-term care insurance, and other related services. For more information, please visit [www.premera.com](http://www.premera.com).

#### About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, with headquarters in the St. Paul suburb of Eagan, was chartered in 1933 as Minnesota's first health plan and continues to carry out its charter mission today: to promote a wider, more economical and timely availability of health services for the people of Minnesota. A nonprofit, taxable organization, Blue Cross is the largest health plan based in Minnesota, covering 2.9 million members in Minnesota and nationally through its health plans or plans administered by its affiliated companies. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, headquartered in Chicago. Go to [www.bluecrossmn.com](http://www.bluecrossmn.com) to learn more about Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.

#### About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, a nonprofit organization, provides and administers health benefits to 4.7 million members residing in Michigan in addition to members of Michigan-headquartered groups who reside outside the state. The company offers a broad variety of plans including: Traditional Blue Cross Blue Shield; Blue Preferred, Community Blue and Healthy Blue Incentives PPOs; Blue Care Network HMO; BCN Healthy Blue Living; Flexible Blue plans compatible with health savings accounts; Medicare Advantage; Part D Prescription Drug plans, and MyBlue products in the under-age-65 individual market. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. For more company information, visit [www.bcbsm.com](http://www.bcbsm.com).

SOURCE WellPoint, Inc.

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Blue Cross and Blue Shield (MI)	Health Maintenance Organizations Private Health Insurance		United States - Pennsylvania United States - Minnesota

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