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For Immediate Release

Weight Loss Surgery Improving Health Conditions

By Aley Tohamy, M.D., and Keith Krietz, M.D.

Philadelphia, PA, Wednesday, October 8, 2008—Obesity has a far-ranging negative effect on health. The U.S. Surgeon General has declared that obesity is an epidemic condition, affecting 31.4 percent of adults in the United States. Obesity is a life-threatening disease and a major risk factor for other serious medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, stroke, sleep apnea and cancer. Obesity is related to 112,000 deaths each year in the U.S., according to a 2005 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Obesity is determined by Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is a measure of weight proportionate to height. BMI is considered a useful measurement of the amount of body fat. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), a BMI from 18.5 to 24.9 is considered normal while a BMI of more than 25 is considered overweight. A person is considered obese if the BMI is greater than 30, and morbidly obese if the BMI is 40 or greater. To calculate your BMI visit chhealthsystem.com, and click on Health Resources.

Recent studies have shown that improvements, or even a cure of some of the conditions associated with obesity, can be achieved by weight loss, healthier eating habits and improved lifestyle. Also, similar studies have shown that people cannot achieve long-term weight loss through dieting and behavior modification alone. When diet and exercise programs fail, weight loss surgery may be an option. People with morbid obesity had a 40 percent higher mortality rate than those who underwent weight loss surgery. Mortality rates from other diseases also decreased after weight loss surgery; diabetes 92 percent, cancer 60 percent and coronary artery disease 56 percent, according to a 2007 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

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The new Weight Loss Surgery Program at Chestnut Hill Hospital, lead by Penn surgeons Keith Kreitz, M.D., and Aley Tohamy, M.D., is aimed at eliminating leading obesity-related health conditions, while patients enjoy side benefits of improved appearance and increased self esteem. Drs Tohamy and Kreitz will offer Laparoscopic Gastric Bypass and Laparoscopic Adjustable Gastric Banding. The program includes free monthly information sessions and support group sessions for all who are interested in exploring the option of weight loss surgery to improve their lifestyle and health conditions.

The Hospital program will educate, motivate and assist clients with the lifestyle changes that are necessary to be successful with weight loss surgery. A multidisciplinary team of physician specialists, psychologists, dedicated nurses and registered dieticians will prepare you for surgery and assist you through your journey to improved health. To learn more about surgical weight loss and meet others who have been through the procedure, attend *The Weight is Over*, a free information session on Wednesday, October 29; 6 p.m. at the Hospital. A support group meeting open to anyone who has had weight loss surgery and would benefit from on-going assistance will follow at 7 p.m. Call 215-753-2000 for more information or to register.

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Chestnut Hill Health System—provides quality health care, covering the spectrum of services for families in northwest Philadelphia and eastern Montgomery County.