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**California Association of Health Plans &
California Medical Association Foundation Team Up to
Combat Obesity**

*Unique Partnership Develops First-Ever Toolkits to Address
"The Fastest-Growing, Most Threatening Disease in America Today"*

SACRAMENTO, CA – As Californians get physically fit for their summer activities, the California Association of Health Plans (CAHP) and the California Medical Association Foundation (CMAF) teamed up today to encourage physicians to discuss healthier lifestyles with their patients by distributing the first-ever comprehensive toolkits to address overweight and obesity.

At a press conference at Sutter General Hospital in Sacramento, the two organizations unveiled the three toolkits they've developed to address obesity and overweight and to improve the care and outcomes for adults, children and adolescents and pre/post bariatric surgery patients.

This set of easy-to-use guides includes the first obesity toolkit ever produced for adults here in California and the first time that all three toolkits have been published together.

"As we get closer to summer, many Californians will look to fashion magazines or TV infomercials for the latest fad diets, rather than turning to their doctors who know best how to prevent and combat obesity," said Chris Ohman, CAHP president and CEO. "These kits will encourage and foster discussion between doctors and their patients about achieving and maintaining a healthy weight."

The toolkits will be distributed to physicians across the state so they can better assist their patients in weight management and obesity prevention. The toolkits will also be available to the public on the CAHP and CMAF websites as well as participating health plans' websites.

According to the former United States Surgeon General, obesity is "the fastest-growing, most threatening disease in America today," and California is experiencing the fastest increase in adult obesity of any state in the nation. The direct and indirect cost of obesity is \$100 billion per year nationally. In California alone, it is \$28.5 billion.

“Obesity is second only to tobacco as a preventable cause of death, and overweight adults have a significantly higher risk of disease,” said Dr. Frank Staggers, Chair, CMA Foundation Board of Directors. “Less than one-third of overweight patients report being counseled by their physicians regarding obesity, yet in a recent survey nine out of 10 Californians said they want their doctors to be their primary source of information about nutrition, physical activity and other issues associated with weight management. That is why the CMA Foundation and CAHP are working together to reverse the obesity trend – starting in the doctors’ office.”

The result of this unique collaboration is the “ultimate” package of obesity toolkits which include:

- Guidelines and policy statements on obesity prevention, weight management, diet, physical activity counseling, body mass index (BMI) screening and other measurements
- Effective communication techniques to help patients make decisions
- Culturally appropriate, ready to copy, materials and handouts
- Identification of internet tools and information
- Strategies for managing overweight patients
- Patient education resources

These three toolkits were developed in response to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s challenge for the state’s community organizations and companies to take action to address obesity and weight management issues during his 2005 Summit on Health, Nutrition and Obesity. CAHP accepted that challenge by agreeing to create clinical education toolkits. At the same time, the CMA Foundation was hearing from physicians throughout the state the need for a uniform set of resources to help them address the prevention and management of overweight and obesity in their practices. The CMA Foundation partnered with CAHP to meet the challenge.

This unique collaboration of health plans and doctors brought together an expert panel of 53 practicing physicians, health plan medical directors and other healthcare professionals to develop these guides to assist doctors and their patients in the fight against obesity.

CAHP is a statewide trade association representing 40 full-service health plans. Through legislative advocacy, education and collaboration with other member organizations, CAHP works to sustain a strong environment in which our member plans can provide access to products that offer choice and flexibility to the more than 21 million members they serve. For more information, please visit www.calhealthplans.org or call (916) 552-2910.

The CMA Foundation is a nonprofit organization that serves as a link between physicians and their communities. The Foundation champions improved individual and community health through a partnership of leaders in medicine, related health professions and the community. For more information, please visit www.calmedfoundation.org or call (916) 551-2550.