



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 17, 2009

Contact: **Abby Horn**
(404) 885-9596 x4524

Obesity Rates Will Continue to Increase, Drive Health Care Costs in South Carolina over Next Decade, According to New Study

Obesity-Attributable Health Spending to Reach More than \$1,500 Per Person by 2018

Columbia, South Carolina (November 17, 2009) – A new [report](#) released today based on research by Emory University Health Care Economist Ken Thorpe, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease (PFCD), shows increasing obesity rates in South Carolina and across the country will result in higher health care spending for states and individuals. The study, which was commissioned by UnitedHealth Foundation, Partnership for Prevention, and American Public Health Association in conjunction with their annual *Americas Health Rankings* report, is the first to estimate obesity prevalence and costs at the state and national level 10 years from now.

The study, “The Future Cost of Obesity: National and State Estimates of the Impact of Obesity on Direct Health Care Expenses,” shows that obesity rates will reach 48.1 percent in South Carolina and associated health care costs will surpass \$5,343,000,000 for the entire state and \$1,505 per person.

“This study demonstrates that as policymakers seek to make health care more affordable, addressing the obesity epidemic is vital,” said Thorpe. “It threatens to ‘break the bank’ of our health care system, and family budgets, if we don’t take action.”

In South Carolina in 2008, 35.6 percent were obese, which compares to one-third of all Americans who are obese. According to the new study, if obesity rates in South Carolina remained at 2008 levels, residents in the state could expect to save \$858 per person in health spending over the next 10 years.

“Over one-third of South Carolina’s youth is either overweight or obese,” said Donna Richter, Ed.D., Executive Director of the South Carolina Public Health Institute. “If we allow this trend to continue into adulthood we will be spending more than 10 percent of our healthcare budget on obesity related issues like diabetes.”

At the national level, obesity accounts for nearly 10 percent of what the U.S. spends annually on health care. One-third of the increase in domestic health spending since the mid-1980s is linked to the doubling of obesity.

Dr. Thorpe’s report can be accessed at www.fightchronicdisease.org or at www.americashealthrankings.com.

About the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease:

The Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease (PFCD) is a statewide coalition of patients, providers, community organizations, business groups and health policy experts committed to raising awareness of and promoting public policies to prevent the number one cause of death, disability and rising health care costs in the U.S.: chronic disease.

The PFCD’s mission is to:

- **Educate** the public about chronic disease and potential solutions for individuals, communities, and the nation
- **Mobilize** Americans to call for change in how policymakers, governments, employers, health institutions, and other entities approach chronic disease



PARTNERSHIP TO FIGHT
CHRONIC DISEASE

A VISION FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

- **Engage** policymakers to make the issue of chronic disease a top priority, especially during the national debate on health reform

For more information, please visit www.fightchronicdisease.org.

###