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CONTACT:
Shameka Lloyd, Director
Marketing & Communications
Halifax Regional Medical Center
Phone: 252-535-8743
Email: slloyd@halifaxrmc.org

HALIFAX REGIONAL IMPLEMENTS NEW PAIN POLICY JANUARY 1

Emergency Department seeks to curb pain medication overuse, misuse, and addiction

December 29, 2015 (Roanoke Rapids, NC) – Effective January 1, 2016, the Halifax Regional will implement a new pain management policy in its Emergency Department. The new pain management policy seeks to better treat patients and help them avoid the dangerous side effects of pain medications and curb the potential for addiction.

The use of prescription narcotics is growing and with increased use, so too are overdoses and deaths linked to narcotic medications. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 44 people die each day in the United States from prescription pain medication overdoses. Emergency Departments across the county are a major source of narcotic prescriptions. Emergency Department physicians must balance the patient's need for pain relief without creating or worsening any dependencies on pain medication.

Pain as the Fifth Vital Sign: Each patient received in the Emergency Department will be assessed for pain. In developing our new pain management policy (effective January 1, 2016), Halifax Regional will follow recommendations set forth by the Joint Commission and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Key elements of the new pain management policy will include:

- Emergency Department providers are not able to administer narcotics or certain sedatives to treat certain chronic conditions.
- Emergency Department is not able to refill prescriptions for controlled substances, including lost or expired medications.
- By law, the Emergency Department is not able to prescribe Methadone or Buprenorphine (Suboxone) for patients in a Methadone treatment program.
- The Emergency Department routinely accesses the NC Drug Enforcement (DEA) website, Department of Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP). This is done to document prescription history and to protect patients from potential for overdose, fraud, or identity theft.

Our Emergency Department physicians are focus on promoting safe, responsible prescribing practices that are in the best interest of our patients and the community. Patients who present to the Halifax Regional Emergency Department suffering from chronic pain conditions will receive non-narcotic pain medications as temporary treatment until the patient can follow-up with their primary care physician. It is important for all patients to work directly with their primary care provider or pain management specialist to identify causes and treatment of chronic pain.

Halifax Regional understands there is a delicate balance of responsibilities as we seek to relieve patients of their pain while treating pain responsibly to avoid the dangerous side effects and the potential risks of addiction that narcotic

medications can cause. The Medical Center asks for the community's continued support during this transition to safer, more responsible pain management practices.

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About Halifax Regional

Halifax Regional Medical Center is licensed for 204 beds, including psychiatric and nursery. A non-profit organization, Halifax Regional is fully accredited by the Joint Commission. The Medical Center was recently honored by the North Carolina Nurses Association as a Hallmarks of Healthy Workplaces for nursing excellence. For more information, visit www.halifaxregional.org.