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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Ventura County Launches Pilot Program for Elderly Fall Prevention

(VENTURA, Calif.) – The Ventura County Health Care Agency announces the formation of a pilot program initiated by the Elderly Fall Prevention Coalition (EFPC) of Ventura, beginning July 14th, in west Ventura County. The EFPC is a collaborative effort which includes Ventura County Medical Center, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, Ventura County Public Health, Ventura County Area Agency on Aging, the Camarillo Health Care District, Community Memorial Hospital, Ojai Valley Hospital, St. John’s Regional Medical Center, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), all Ventura County ambulance providers, Ventura and Oxnard fire departments, Livingston Memorial, Scan Health, Kaiser, Healthy Ventura County, Healthwise Home Care Solutions and Assisted Home Health.

The EFPC has developed a unique program that involves instituting fall prevention measures at the initial point of contact, when Emergency Medical Services personnel respond to a 911 call after a fall. A series of events occur that will enable EMS to leave educational material in homes and conduct a rapid fall assessment. Victims transported to emergency rooms will undergo further evidence-based testing to assess their fall risk. Prior to discharge from the hospital it will be determined whether a fall victim requires close follow-up for health issues, versus the need for home safety improvement. The target age group for the pilot study will be 65 years and older, though anyone outside of this age group with an injury due to a fall, will not be exempt from appropriate treatment.

“It is a known fact that every 29 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall. Every 15 seconds, an older adult is treated in an emergency room for a fall-related injury,” says Dr. Thomas Duncan, Trauma Medical Co-Director for Ventura County Medical Center and Medical Co-Director of Anacapa Surgical Associates. “Falls are the #1 cause of injury deaths, unintentional injuries and hospital admissions in the elderly.”

Thirty percent of adults over the age of 65 will fall each year. The cost of falls to the US Health System was \$28 billion in 2010, and projected to rise to \$60 billion by 2020. Muscle strengthening, aerobic and balance exercises all aid in the prevention of falls.