



Public Hearing Comments

Single-Specialty ASC Demonstration Project Petition

**Presented by Richard Truax
Atlantic Orthopedics, P.A.**

Good Afternoon. My name is Richard Truax and I am the Executive Director of Atlantic Orthopedics in Wilmington. I am here today to speak on behalf of our petition to include the New Hanover and Brunswick County service area in the Single Specialty Ambulatory Surgery Demonstration Project for the 2010 State Medical Facilities Plan.

Atlantic Orthopedics is one of the largest general and sub-specialty orthopedic medicine groups in the Southeast. As a comprehensive musculoskeletal center, Atlantic offers comprehensive orthopedic care, including diagnostic, rehabilitative and surgical services. Atlantic is dedicated to providing high quality healthcare to the residents of New Hanover County and surrounding communities including Brunswick County. We actively support the State Health Coordinating Council's decision to include a single-specialty ambulatory surgery center demonstration project in the 2010 State Medical Facilities Plan. Further, we believe that there is demographic, statistical and qualitative data to support the inclusion of a New Hanover and Brunswick County service area in the demonstration project.

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The New Hanover/Brunswick County service area is ideally located to support a single-specialty ambulatory surgery center in Eastern North Carolina. The proposed single-specialty ASC demonstration project does not currently identify a project site in Eastern North Carolina. Rather, the demonstration project identifies two service areas in the western half of North Carolina and one in the central portion of North Carolina.

In previous demonstration projects, the SHCC has evenly distributed need determinations throughout the state. For example, the multi-position MRI Scanner demonstration project identified one need determination in the western half of the state and one need determination in the eastern half of the state as defined by health service areas. In order to effectively evaluate the efficacy of the proposed demonstration project, the project sites should be distributed appropriately and evenly throughout the state.

New Hanover County is the fourth most populous county in North Carolina, and Brunswick County is the third fastest-growing county in North Carolina. According to the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management, New Hanover County will exceed 200,000 residents by 2010. The New Hanover and Brunswick County service area is also growing at a rate that is more than double that of the Triad service area and comparable to the Charlotte-Area and Triangle service areas.

The New Hanover/Brunswick County service area is also one of North Carolina's major population centers. In fact, New Hanover County is the third most densely-populated county in North Carolina with over 1,000 people per square mile. This is less than only Mecklenburg and Wake counties, and is

considerably higher than the rest of the counties currently included in the proposed demonstration project.

The criteria outlined in the demonstration project description describe the rationale of locating single-specialty ambulatory surgical facilities in high population areas in order to prevent the facilities from harming hospitals in rural areas. It is clear that New Hanover County is consistent with this criterion.

In addition to being a large and growing population center, New Hanover County also has extensive medical resources to support a demonstration project. For example, New Hanover County has the fourth highest concentration of physicians per population among the counties included in the proposed service areas.

The New Hanover / Brunswick County service area also boasts numerous operating rooms. There are currently 43 existing or approved shared or ambulatory surgical operating rooms in New Hanover and Brunswick counties, including three licensed multi-specialty ambulatory surgery centers. Furthermore, New Hanover County currently has an ambulatory surgery utilization rate that is substantially higher than any of the other counties currently included in the proposed demonstration project.

The New Hanover and Brunswick County service area is a well-resourced, active medical community. This is consistent with the demonstration project's criteria and rationale for selecting service areas. The extensive existing medical resources located in the New Hanover/Brunswick County service area and its' sizably growing population ensure existing hospitals will not be harmed by an

additional single specialty ASC demonstration project, and, thus, is well-suited for the single specialty ASC demonstration project .

As demonstrated in our written petition, our request is consistent with the three basic principles of quality, access, and value as identified by the State Medical Facilities Plan.

If this petition is ^{approved} improved access will be greatly enhanced as a single-specialty ambulatory surgery center demonstration project will be available in Eastern North Carolina. Surgical procedures will be more readily available outside of a hospital-setting, and in a facility dedicated to one surgical specialty, thereby greatly increasing convenience and comfort to patients. Patients will have a new option for surgical care.

Approval of this petition will also enhance the quality of medical services. The demonstration project's focus on single-specialty surgery will enable the physicians and their clinical and support staff to become extremely focused and efficient in providing care. This will have a direct and positive effect on the clinical quality of services provided. The projected high volume of single specialty cases is likely to increase the quality of care delivered each day, based on the well-established linkage between procedure volumes and physician and staff technical proficiencies. As a result, the quality of care will improve as facility staff hone their clinical skills and training through higher utilization and repetition.

The rising cost of healthcare services continues to cause concern among many constituencies in North Carolina. The operational efficiencies of a single-specialty ambulatory surgical center will enable providers to offer lower costs.

A single-specialty ambulatory surgery setting allows healthcare providers to operate more efficiently with lower costs than other types of health care facilities. Approval of this petition will greatly benefit patients in terms of healthcare costs and value.

Should the petition not be granted, an excellent opportunity to determine the efficacy of the single-specialty ASC demonstration project in a unique medical environment would be misspent. The New Hanover/Brunswick service area boasts the population and medical infrastructure necessary to effectively evaluate the success of the demonstration project. It is also unique because it does not currently host a single-specialty ASC. The other service areas in the proposed demonstration project already support single-specialty ASC's. Inclusion of the New Hanover/Brunswick County service area would be a valuable asset in determining the efficacy of single-specialty ambulatory surgical centers in the North Carolina healthcare marketplace. Thank you.