FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Catholic Health Initiatives to Participate in the National Institutes of Health Cancer Gene-Mapping Project

CHI will procure samples from its national network of community hospitals to expand the reach and advance the research of The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA) project

DENVER – Dec. 11, 2008 -- Catholic Health Initiatives has been awarded a $1.1 million contract on behalf of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) as part of The Cancer Genome Atlas project. The four-year sub-contract, issued by SAIC-Frederick, Inc., which operates the laboratories of the NCI at Frederick, will enable CHI hospitals across the country to collect and contribute biospecimens from specific tumor types to The Cancer Genome Atlas.

The NCI contractor, SAIC-Frederick, Inc., awarded the four-year subcontract under which CHI hospitals across the country will collect and contribute biospecimens from specific tumor types to The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA).

TCGA was launched in December 2005 as a large-scale, systematic approach to identifying the changes that occur in the genomes of cancer cells. The goal is to generate genomic information that the research community can use to develop new and improved strategies for detecting, treating and, ultimately, preventing cancer. The types of tumors being studied in the project include brain cancer (glioblastoma), ovarian cancer and lung cancer (squamous cell), which together account for more than 200,000 cases of cancer in the United States each year.

“We are pleased to expand our acquisition network to include some of CHI’s community hospitals,” said Joy Beveridge, project manager for the NCI. “This project is dependent on acquiring high-quality, untreated tumor specimens from patients with these cancer types, and Catholic Health Initiatives has the systems in place to greatly expand our reach beyond academic medical centers.”

“We are in a unique position to offer high-quality tissue samples from community hospitals, which is where 85% of all cancer patients are treated,” said Alan Armer, PhD, vice president of research and development for CHI. “Our specimens will meet TCGA’s strict scientific technical and ethical requirements, and ultimately support critical discoveries about these cancer types.”

Initially two CHI hospitals will participate in the tissue collection, while others from the 77-hospital system may be added later. The two initial participants are: Penrose-St. Francis Health Services, Colorado Springs, Colo. (Penrose Cancer Center); and St. Joseph Medical Center, Towson, Md. (The Cancer Institute at St. Joseph Medical Center).
As contributors to TCGA’s tissue sample base, CHI will now join the nation’s leading academic medical centers in playing a key role in TCGA’s efforts. The principal investigators who collect these resources serve as members of the project’s steering committee and provide biomedical expertise in guiding the project.

TCGA has already reported the first results of its study, which focused on the most common form of brain cancer, glioblastoma. In the September 2008 edition of the journal *Nature*, the TCGA team described the discovery of new genetic mutations and other DNA alterations that have potential implications for the diagnosis and treatment of glioblastoma tumors.

“Through our participation in this important study, we will help the NIH gain a better understanding of the complex genetic alterations that lead to cancer,” said Mark Krasna, M.D., medical director of The Cancer Institute at St. Joseph Medical Center and principal investigator for the TCGA project. “The hope is that this understanding will enable the discovery and development of new drug therapies, diagnostic tools and preventive strategies for many types of cancer.”

**About Catholic Health Initiatives**
Catholic Health Initiatives is a national nonprofit health organization that includes 77 hospitals; 40 long-term care, assisted- and residential-living facilities; and two community health-services organizations in 20 states. Together, the facilities provided almost $480 million in community benefit in the 2007 fiscal year, including services for the poor, free clinics, education and research. With 68,000 employees and annual revenues of $7.7 billion, CHI is the nation’s second-largest Catholic health care system. ([http://catholichealthinitiatives.org](http://catholichealthinitiatives.org)).

**About TCGA**
TCGA is comprised of a network of research institutions, including clinical sites, a specimen processing facility, genomic characterization centers, and a data management center. The clinical sites are medical institutions identified to have significant retrospective, or the capacity for rapidly accruing prospective, collections of clinically annotated biospecimens of the primary, untreated cancers being studied. A complete explanation of TCGA rationale, process, and components can be found at the project’s Web site ([http://cancergenome.nih.gov](http://cancergenome.nih.gov)).