



WESTERN BARIATRIC
INSTITUTE

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 16, 2008

Media Contact:

Kim Brown

(775) 326-9171 or (775) 544-2505 (c)

kbrown@westernsurgical.com

Western Bariatric Institute & Renown South Meadows Named “Center of Expertise” By Blue Cross of California

(Reno, NV) – Western Bariatric Institute announced today that they have been approved by Blue Cross of California to be a “Center of Expertise” for patients interested in weight loss surgery. This certification, done in partnership with Renown South Meadows Medical Center, now allows Blue Cross of California patients to undergo weight loss surgery in Reno.

Western Bariatric Institute has been providing weight loss surgery to patients in Northern Nevada and Northern California since 2003. Patients can choose to undergo gastric bypass or gastric banding through this facility.

“Attaining this certification was very important to our program so that we could support and see patients from these areas. We were committed to making this a priority for our program so that patients could choose our program for weight loss surgery,” stated Billie Keuper, Program Administrator.

Blue Cross of California covers many lives in Northern California so this new coverage will provide more options for patients in the region. Western Bariatric Institute is already expecting to see at least 100 people come through over the next few months due to this new accreditation.

“We have had a number of people waiting for this to happen so we are excited to get the word out to not only them, but also to others who knew that we were not previously a contracted provider,” stated Keuper. “We are ready to help these patients start a new life!”

Obesity and its associated diseases have become the number one health problem in our country and obesity related deaths annually now have overtaken smoking deaths. Recent reports state that 2/3 of Americans are overweight or obese and 1/3 of all children are overweight.

According to a report released in 2007 by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the number of bariatric surgeries has grown from 16,000 procedures performed in 1992 to 170,000 performed in 2000.

For more information about Western Bariatric Institute, please visit www.westernbariatricinstitute.com.

- 30 -