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## PRESS RELEASE

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# Hospitals Catching on to Healthy Food, New Report Finds

## Healthcare Leaders Supporting Farmers Markets and Organic Food

Minneapolis – Hospitals around the country are starting to follow their own advice to patients about the importance of a beneficial diet by offering fresh, healthy food at their facilities, according to a report released today by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

The report, *Healthy Food, Healthy Hospitals, Healthy Communities: Stories of Health Care Leaders Bringing Fresher, Healthier Food Choices to their Patients, Staff and Communities*, can be found at [iatp.org/foodandhealth](http://iatp.org/foodandhealth).

The average U.S. hospital serves more than a million meals per year. Most serve not only patients and staff but also visitors and the larger community through on-site cafeterias, vending machines and catering services. The report offers several case studies of hospitals finding ways to offer more fresh food, raised locally or organically, to patients in cafeterias and via on-site farmers markets. Some examples include:

- Throughout the U.S., farmers markets and farm stands have operated successfully at medical facilities, including the National Institutes of Health in Maryland, Duke University Medical Center in North Carolina, Allen Memorial Hospital in Iowa, and at multiple Kaiser Permanente facilities in California, Oregon, and Hawaii.
- In Iowa, Bartels Lutheran Home purchases 15 percent of its food from local growers and producers, including beef raised without the use of hormones or antibiotics.
- Cancer Treatment Centers of America serves patients in facilities in Illinois and Oklahoma a menu largely of certified organic food, to optimize nutrition and avoid environmental toxins;
- In Vermont, Fletcher Allen Medical Center has a new patient menu that focuses on the use of local, fresh food to improve patient health and support local businesses.
- In San Antonio, TX, five hospital systems worked together with vending machine companies to provide healthier offerings.

“It’s great that hospitals are starting to ‘walk the talk’ when it comes to food. They aren’t just telling people to eat better, but are making quality food more accessible,” says the report’s author Marie Kulick, Senior Associate in IATP’s Food and Health Program. “These leaders are taking impressive steps. We hope others will be inspired to do the same.”

Kaiser Permanente, in particular, has embraced the concept that improving access to fresh, nutritious foods is just an extension of their core mission. Kaiser Permanente started their first on-site farmers market in 2003. It currently has 14 markets and plan to have 29 in operation by December 2005.

The Kaiser Permanente farmers market program gives the Oakland, Calif.-based nonprofit integrated health plan a chance to serve not only as a health care provider but also as health promoter, says Loel Solomon, Ph.D., its national director of Community Health Initiatives. “Prevention isn’t just something that happens in the doctor’s office,” Solomon says. “As part of our overall mission to provide total health to our members, the farmers markets are an integrated part of improving the health of the communities we serve.”

In addition to profiling successful case studies, the report identifies strategies for overcoming potential hurdles (such as tight budgets and restrictive vendor contracts) for healthcare administrators wanting to serve more local, sustainably produced food in their facilities.

Poor diet contributes to death and disease, including obesity and diabetes, heart disease, learning disabilities, neurological disease, food-borne illnesses and some cancers. Eating nutritious, locally and sustainably-grown whole foods, can improve human health while enhancing the environmental quality and economic vitality of local communities.

“This is a very exciting trend that not only benefits patients, staff and the community at-large, but gives hospitals a really unique way to set themselves apart from competitors,” says Kulick.

The full report can be viewed at: [www.iatp.org/foodandhealth](http://www.iatp.org/foodandhealth).

*The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works globally to promote resilient family farms, communities and ecosystems through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy.*

IATP is a member of Health Care Without Harm - an international coalition of 433 organizations in 52 countries working to transform the health care industry so it is no longer a source of harm to people and the environment.

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