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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The Oregon Clinic's Hernia Center Offers Facts to Recognize
National Hernia Awareness Month**

*-- Misconceptions Often Prevent Individuals from Seeking Treatment for this
Common, Easily Treated Condition --*

Portland, Ore., June 14, 2011 – Every time Chuck Fuller (not his real name) coughed, the lower left side of his abdomen hurt. But it wasn't until a few weeks later when he noticed a lump protruding from the same region of his body that he decided to seek medical help. "I thought it might be something serious, like a tumor, and I was greatly relieved when it turned out to be just a hernia," he said. "After a short operation and nearly painless recovery period, I was good as new."

Fuller had an inguinal hernia, which is the most common type of hernia. Heavy lifting, strenuous sports, obesity, straining during urination or bowel movements, even prolonged bouts of coughing or sneezing -- anything that puts pressure on the abdominal muscles -- can result in this type of hernia, so called because the affected area is along the inguinal canal in the groin region, an area that can affect both men and women."

Fuller's surgeon is Jason C. Gilster, MD, Medical Director of The Oregon Clinic's Pacific Northwest Hernia Center. Though certainly less dangerous than many medical conditions, Dr. Gilster cautions that inguinal hernias can become deadly if ignored too long. "Men tend to overlook this type of condition, figuring it will eventually go away," he said. "But this is a myth. Once you have a hernia, it's there forever, until you have it fixed. Additionally, some hernias can become life-threatening."

Hernias are caused by weak spots or ruptures in various parts of the body, most commonly in the lower abdominal wall and the groin area or near the region of the navel or previous surgical sites. More than five million people in the U.S. are living with an abdominal wall hernia, and about 27% of the male population will develop this type of hernia during their lifetime (compared to 3% of women). It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of people avoid seeking help for a hernia because they fear a painful, long recovery.

According to Dr. Gilster, a surgeon who specializes in hernias, the general public needs more education about the subject. Since June is National Hernia Awareness Month, he offers the following facts that everyone should know about this misunderstood condition:

- **Hernias can happen to anyone, not just the elderly and not just men.** Babies can be born with hernias and many men get inguinal hernias when they're younger. They can also result from a weakened spot in the abdominal wall of a woman who has had a Cesarean section.
- **Hernias should be evaluated and not ignored.** If left untreated, hernias will increase in size and become more painful. They can also lead to more lethal complications.
- **Hernias don't always require traditional surgery involving hospitalization and a long, painful recovery.** Using new treatment options, some hernias can be repaired in less than an hour on an outpatient basis.
- **Modern less painful surgical techniques using reinforcing mesh to provide strength and durability have replaced traditional methods** of suturing hernias, which have a high failure rate and result in more pain. Some techniques require only a small incision and local anesthesia.
- **Not all surgeons are experienced in repairing hernias.** Hernia specialists perform hundreds of hernia repairs each year and are trained in the most modern surgical techniques.
- **Normal activities can be resumed a few days after hernia surgery.** Heavy lifting or strenuous activities may require two to four weeks of recovery.

About The Oregon Clinic

The Oregon Clinic is the largest private specialty physician practice in Oregon, with more than 120 physicians practicing over 30 different medical and surgical specialties and sub-specialties. We use a team approach to address health conditions at more than 15 locations from Vancouver to Salem, and from Hood River to Astoria. Founded in Portland in 1994, our physicians and staff are committed to delivering the highest quality patient care, practicing evidence-based medicine, and providing leadership for the healthcare community. Visit www.orclinic.com or call (503) 935-8000 for more information.

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