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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**EXCELA HEALTH CARDIOLOGIST ADDRESSES  
CHEST PAIN IN WOMEN DURING HEART MONTH**

**GREENSBURG, PA, February 9, 2010** ...When it comes to women and heart disease, the numbers speak for themselves. Heart disease is the number one killer of women, and affects more women than men. One out of every three adult women has a form of cardiovascular disease.

Marking February as National Heart Month, Excela Health will host a special community seminar titled "Chest Pain in Women," 6:30 p.m., February 22, Norwin Medical Commons. Speaking woman to woman, cardiologist Maliha Zahid, MD, PhD, FACC, will discuss coronary artery disease and chest pain, their causes, prevention and the dissimilarities between men and women with regard to heart health.

According to Dr. Zahid, chest pain is often interpreted as a sign of an impending heart attack, but this is not necessarily true, especially for women. Studies have shown women who have yet to experience menopause are less likely to have heart diseases, as a high level of estrogen provides protection by preventing atherosclerosis or the narrowing of the arteries. However, after menopause, as the level of estrogen decreases over time, women become equally likely to develop coronary heart diseases.

"Women experiencing chest pain should definitely be tested and examined for coronary heart disease," noted Dr. Zahid. "If heart disease is ruled out, then additional tests should be performed because in women, chest pain in particular may also indicate the presence of medical conditions not related to the heart."

Other conditions presenting with symptoms of chest pain include valvular heart disease, mitral prolapse, rheumatic heart disease, mitral stenosis and angina. A pulmonary embolism, which is caused by blood clots in the major blood vessels that carry blood to the lungs, also can produce chest pain. A collapsed lung, esophageal reflux, inflammation of rib cartilage, gallstones or liver diseases like hepatitis likewise can be responsible for symptoms of chest pain. In addition, stress, anxiety, pneumonia and gas can be contributing factors.

“Chest pain of any type should not be neglected. It is best to err on the side of caution and see a physician immediately to discuss concerns,” emphasized Dr. Zahid. “Women need to control risk factors such as smoking, excessive weight gain and blood cholesterol levels which in the long run can increase their risk for coronary heart disease.”

For more information on heart health or to register for this upcoming program, call the Excelsa Health Call Center, toll-free 1-877-771-1234.