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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ORANGE COUNTY SENIORS REPORT HIGHER INCIDENCE OF CANCER,
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND DIABETES VERSUS LOS ANGELES
SENIORS, ACCORDING TO ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH NEEDS
ASSESSMENT**

Over Half of County's Seniors Overweight or Obese

SANTA ANA, Calif. (March 22, 2006) – Orange County seniors reported a higher incidence of diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer than seniors living in Los Angeles County, according to a study conducted by the Orange County Health Needs Assessment (OCHNA).

The report, prepared every three years and based on data collected in 2004, provides a detailed picture of the health care landscape of Orange County. The Orange County Health Needs Assessment is a not-for-profit organization that is supported by the County, area hospitals and health care systems. The overall study on the health and wellbeing of Orange County residents was released in 2005.

With over 3.5 million seniors, California accounts for the largest number of persons 65 and older in the country. In Orange County, seniors make up more than 10 percent of the population.

According to the study, Orange County seniors -- compared to those living in Los Angeles County -- had a lower incidence of heart disease, the nation's leading killer of both men and women.

With early detection being one of the most powerful treatment tools, a large number of Orange County seniors seek regular examinations. Results from the study indicate that nearly 85 percent of men over the age of 65 had undergone a digital rectal exam and nearly 88 percent of women had undergone a clinical breast exam.

OCHNA found that Orange County seniors play an active role in managing their own health , with more than 90 percent of seniors visiting a doctor in the past six months. Even though barriers often exist in obtaining adequate health care, only 7 percent of local seniors cited office hours as a problem, making this the most prevalent barrier to accessing care.

While elder abuse is on the rise in Orange County, with an average of 436 cases reported to the County of Orange Social Services Agency every month, only 1 percent of the seniors surveyed claimed to have been victims during the past year. According to the study a large number of seniors in Orange County are self reliant, with only 2 percent reporting they had someone to assist them with their daily care, a 7 percent drop from 2001.

Even as the growing problem of childhood obesity gains attention, senior obesity remains a prevalent problem as well. OCHNA found that over half of the senior population in Orange County is overweight or obese. This is often due to the sedentary lifestyle of older people and a decrease in physical activity.

Access to health care is a major concern in the senior community. The study indicated that just over 2 percent of seniors over the age of 65 lacked health coverage. Of those that had access to health coverage, the large majority had Medicare. Yet nearly 40

percent lacked dental coverage, 14 percent lacked prescription coverage, approximately a quarter lacked vision coverage and less than a third lacked mental health coverage.

Overall, over 75 percent of seniors in Orange County describe their health as excellent, very good or good.

To access and download free copies of both the OCHNA Seniors Report and the 2005 OCHNA Executive Summary and Full Data Report , log on to www.ochna.org
