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Society of Interventional Radiology Applauds Senate's Action To Fund Screenings for Deadly Aneurysms

Interventional Radiologists Commend Proactive Approach To Treating Silent Killer – Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms

Fairfax, Virginia (November 7, 2005) – Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR) supports the Senate's efforts to increase the early detection of abdominal aortic aneurysms (AAA). A newly-passed Senate amendment will institute a one-time ultrasound screening for abdominal aortic aneurysms through Medicare, as well as establish a national education and information campaign. AAA is caused by a weakened area in the main vessel that supplies blood from the heart to the rest of the body. When blood flows through the aorta, the pressure of the blood beats against the weakened wall, which then bulges, balloon-like, into an aneurysm. If the aneurysm grows large enough, there is a danger that it will burst, which is usually fatal.

With a threefold increase in the occurrence of abdominal aortic aneurysms (AAA) over the past 30 years, SIR has worked closely with congressional leaders to ensure patients receive access to screenings that can save their life. SIR especially commends the leadership of Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) who sponsored the amendment to bill S.1932, as well as bipartisan co-sponsors Jim Bunning (R-KY), Christopher Dodd (D-CT), Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), John Rockefeller (D-WV), Craig Thomas (R-WY) and George Voinovich (R-OH). As co-sponsors, these leaders are addressing a health issue that accounts for more than 15,000 deaths each year.

"Once an abdominal aortic aneurysm has ruptured, the chances of survival are low, with 80 to 90 percent of all ruptured aneurysms resulting in death. These deaths can be avoided if an aneurysm is detected and treated before it ruptures," explained interventional radiologist George Fueredi, M.D., chair of SIR's Government Affairs & Health Care Policy Committee. "This bill ensures those patients at highest risk, those over 65, can receive AAA screening which can lead to early treatment and ultimately prevent death."

The Society of Interventional Radiology is a member of the National Aneurysm Alliance. Supporting organizations are Society of Vascular Surgery, American College of Surgeons, American Society of Echocardiography, American Vascular Association, Aneurysm Outreach, Inc., National Electrical Manufacturers Association, Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonography, Society for Vascular Ultrasound, Boston Scientific, Cook, Gore, Johnson & Johnson, Medical Media Systems, Medtronic, Philips, Siemens and SonoSite, Inc.

Interventional Radiologists

Interventional Radiologists treat AAA through a minimally invasive stent-graft procedure. For this technique, an incision is made in the skin at the groin through which a catheter is passed into the femoral artery and directed to the aortic aneurysm using imaging. Through the catheter, the physician passes a stent-graft that is compressed into a small diameter within the catheter. The stent-graft is advanced into the aneurysm and then opened to its full diameter. The stent-

graft creates a new normal-sized channel for blood flow while blocking the aneurysm and preventing enlargement and rupture.

Interventional radiologists are board-certified physicians who specialize in minimally invasive, targeted treatments performed using imaging for guidance to treat diseases non-surgically through the blood vessels or through the skin. By combining diagnostic imaging expertise with advanced procedural skills, interventional radiologists perform minimally invasive treatments that have less risk, less pain, and less recovery time than open surgery. Interventional radiologists pioneered minimally invasive modern medicine with the invention of angioplasty and the catheter-delivered stent, which were first used to treat peripheral arterial disease.

Interventional radiologists are available throughout the country. For a local interview or a copy of the Society of Interventional Radiology's new media sourcebook with fact sheets and medical images, email Emily@SIRweb.org or call 703-460-5572. More information can be found at www.SIRweb.org.