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June 3, 2008

The American College of Cardiology Says Reform is Crucial

Today the Senate Finance Committee hosted a hearing titled, "Rising Costs, Low Quality in Health Care: The Necessity for Reform." The American College of Cardiology (ACC) is grateful for the Committee's interest in tackling this important topic, and looks forward to working together with Congress in order to bring about real health system reform.

With heart disease the number one killer in the United States, and with more than 40 percent of Medicare spending going towards cardiovascular-related medicine, cardiology is in a good position to refocus the debate and help set a new standard for health system reform.

"Patients and physicians alike are frustrated with the current health care system and its misaligned incentives, lack of coordinated care, inconsistent quality and growing unaffordability," said Jack Lewin, M.D., CEO of the ACC.

The ACC has invested millions of dollars to improve the quality of health care and is looking at new ways to provide cost-effective, patient-centered care. While the College has made progress, including significantly improving survival from heart attacks and other cardiac conditions, cardiology can do more to reduce costs and save lives. From 1999 to 2006 the U.S. heart attack survival rate improved by 29 percent. However, the costs were also impressive.

"Medical costs are rising at an incredible rate, yet Americans are still unable to get the quality health care they deserve," said Dr. Lewin. "Under our current system, lousy doctors are rewarded, while honest doctors who practice quality, evidence-based care are penalized."

The ACC also supports health information technology as one key way to streamline care and save costs; however, even with these efficiencies, health care costs are still going to escalate without reform.

"Passing the current e-prescribing legislation is a small step toward real reform," added Lewin.

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The American College of Cardiology is leading the way to optimal cardiovascular care and disease prevention. The College is a 34,000-member nonprofit medical society and bestows the credential Fellow of the American College of Cardiology upon physicians who meet its stringent qualifications. The College is a leader in the formulation of health policy, standards and guidelines, and is a staunch supporter of cardiovascular research. The ACC provides professional education and operates national registries for the measurement and improvement of quality care. More information about the association is available online at www.acc.org.

The mission of the American College of Cardiology is to advocate for quality cardiovascular care — through education, research promotion, development and application of standards and guidelines — and to influence health care policy.