

ACC Survey on Health Care Reform Makes News

Concurrent with Capitol Hill visits on Tuesday, September 16, at the 2008 Legislative Conference, the ACC held a press conference and panel discussion featuring Reps. **Tom Barton** (R-Texas) and **Lois Capps** (D-Calif.). The event began with the release by ACC CEO **Jack Lewin, M.D.**, of an ACC-commissioned survey on patient attitudes toward the health care system and views on quality.

Polling 1,000 likely US voters, the survey found that Americans are dissatisfied with the current health care system. Rather than the current system, Americans want health care standards that focus on quality and cost-effective care. Sixty four percent of those surveyed said that quality should be reflected in physician compensation.



(l. to r.) ACC CEO Jack Lewin, M.D., Reps. Tom Barton and Lois Capps and ACC President Doug Weaver, M.D.

The survey findings indicate that ACC's Quality First objectives are on target to meet the nation's desired outcomes for health care reform. Nearly 40 percent said that "helping to set a new standard for health care reform" – Quality First's main goal – should be ACC's top priority.

In addition, the survey indicated the high level of trust given to cardiologists by the public. Among several specialties, cardiologists ranked only behind pediatricians as being the most trustworthy. The survey found that cardiovascular professionals are in the top three most necessary specialties — tied with pediatricians and oncologists — and are considered the most necessary specialty by those over 60 years old. Seventy two percent of respondents said they personally know someone affected by heart disease.

After the release of the survey findings, Lewin and ACC President **Douglas Weaver, M.D., F.A.C.C.**, led a panel discussion with Reps. Barton and Capps. Capps opened the discussion by highlighting the need for better access and more focus on preventive care.

For a CVN video of the event, visit Cardiosource.com/CVN. To view the survey findings, visit QualityFirst.acc.org.

ACC Awarded "Stay in Circulation Community Service Award" from PAD

The Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) Coalition recently presented its National Stay in Circulation Community Service Award to the ACC. The Stay in Circulation Community Service Award recognizes a national organization whose activities have focused on increasing awareness about PAD to high-risk populations, patients and/or the health care community. The College received the award for its extensive efforts to educate health care professionals and to advance the quality of care for people with PAD.

Among its many contributions, the College is spearheading the PAD Guidelines Implementation Task Force that is working to put the ACC/AHA 2005 Guidelines for the Management of Patients With Peripheral Arterial Disease into practice. In addition, the ACC currently is bringing together multidisciplinary stakeholders to develop PAD performance measures and clinical data standards, and is coordinating the PAD GAP Alliance Demonstration Project, a PAD quality improvement project.

CMS Publishes 30-Day Mortality Rates for AMI, HF

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) Hospital Compare Web site now features 30-day risk-adjusted mortality rates for AMI (heart attack), heart failure and pneumonia for every US hospital for the last two years. The mortality rates used for comparison rely on Medicare claims and enrollment information. The rates account for patient deaths within 30 days of hospital admission for any cause and regardless of whether the death occurs at the hospital or after discharge. The mortality rates are adjusted to reflect the characteristics of the hospital and the health of its patients. The calculated rates are the "government's best attempt to create apples-to-apples comparisons between small rural hospitals, suburban hospitals, and large and mid-sized urban medical centers," says Barry Straub, M.D., CMS' chief medical officer. For more information, visit the Hospital Compare Web site at www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov.

Uninsured Will Pay \$30B in 2008, Study Finds

Uninsured U.S. residents will spend \$30 billion in out-of-pocket costs in 2008 and receive \$56 billion in uncompensated care, according to a study appearing in the Web edition of *Health Affairs*. According to the study, conducted by researchers at George Mason University and the Urban Institute, individuals who are uninsured for the entirety of 2008 will incur medical costs of \$1,686 per person and pay 35 percent of these costs, or \$583. Privately insured individuals will incur medical costs of \$3,915 and pay 17 percent of these costs, or \$681. The study also examined which facilities and payers provide and pay for uncompensated care. Researchers found that, in 2008, hospitals will provide \$35 billion in uncompensated care, while community-based providers will provide \$14.6 billion and office-based physicians will provide \$7.8 billion. Medicare and Medicaid will pay for \$18 billion worth of uncompensated care, while \$15 billion will be spent by the states, and \$10 billion will be paid by the Veterans Health Association, the Indian Health Service, community health centers and other similar programs, according to the study.