



News Release

For Immediate Release

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HIGH MORTALITY, HEART ATTACK AND STROKE RATES ACCOMPANY PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE

Senate Resolution Designates September as National P.A.D. Awareness Month

Washington, DC – August 22, 2007 – In an effort to increase awareness of peripheral arterial disease (P.A.D.), a common cardiovascular disease that affects as many as 12 million Americans, the United States Senate passed a resolution designating September as National Peripheral Arterial Disease Awareness Month. Senators Mike Crapo (R-ID) and Byron Dorgan (D-ND), co-chairs of the 110th Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition, introduced the resolution that was unanimously passed by the Senate on August 1.

P.A.D. is characterized by blockages in the arteries that supply blood to the legs and is a warning sign that other arteries, including those in the heart and brain, may be blocked as well. Thus, while P.A.D. is known to cause leg muscle fatigue, cramping or pain when walking and lead to disability, amputation, or a poor quality of life, it is also associated with a high risk of heart attack and stroke. New clinical research published in 2007 documented P.A.D.'s serious consequences. The international REACH registry evaluated cardiovascular outcomes in 68,000 individuals to define their risk. This registry demonstrated that one in five patients with P.A.D. will have a heart attack or stroke, be hospitalized or die due to cardiovascular complications within one year. Patients with P.A.D. had higher one-year death rates than patients who previously had a heart attack or stroke.

“The survival rate for individuals with undetected peripheral arterial disease is worse than the outcome for many other serious diseases, including many common cancers,” noted Senator Crapo. “Despite the grim statistics, P.A.D. is often undiagnosed. By informing Americans about the seriousness of P.A.D. and its risk factors and symptoms, we aim to reduce the burden of this devastating disease.”

Who is at risk for P.A.D.?

Everyone over 50 is at risk for P.A.D. However, your risk is increased if you:

- Smoke, or used to smoke

- more -

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- Have diabetes
- Have high blood pressure
- Have abnormal blood cholesterol
- Are African American
- Have a personal history of coronary heart disease or stroke

The most common warning signs and symptoms of P.A.D. include one or more of following:

- “Claudication” – the symptom of fatigue, heaviness, tiredness or cramping in the leg muscles (calf, thigh or buttocks) that occurs during activity such as walking and that goes away when you rest.
- Skin wounds or ulcers on the feet or toes that are slow to heal (or that do not heal for 8 to 12 weeks).

For almost half of affected individuals, P.A.D. is a silent disease, causing no recognizable symptoms. Many individuals who do have leg muscle discomfort often think it is a natural part of aging and do not tell their health care provider.

“P.A.D. is one of the most dangerous cardiovascular diseases that no one has ever heard of,” said Alan T. Hirsch, M.D., Chair of the P.A.D. Coalition, Professor of Epidemiology and Community Health at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, and Director of the Vascular Medicine Program at the Minneapolis Heart Institute. “By increasing awareness of P.A.D. and assuring patient access to therapies that are proven to save lives and limbs, we can reduce unnecessary suffering and improve the nation’s vascular health.”

To address this serious and growing health problem, the P.A.D. Coalition and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health are conducting a national awareness campaign titled *Stay in Circulation: Take Steps to Learn About P.A.D.* The campaign provides tools for consumers, community groups, medical professionals and health organizations to inform Americans about the risks, symptoms and treatment of P.A.D. New *Stay in Circulation* resources are available online at **www.aboutpad.org**.

Throughout September, the P.A.D. Coalition and its member organizations will disseminate P.A.D. information through special partnerships and activities. In addition, many hospitals and medical centers will offer free screenings for P.A.D. Visit **www.padcoalition.org** to find a P.A.D. screening site.

About the P.A.D. Coalition

The Peripheral Arterial Disease (P.A.D.) Coalition is an alliance of leading health organizations, vascular health professional societies, and government agencies united to raise public and health professional awareness about lower extremity P.A.D. Established in 2004, the P.A.D. Coalition is coordinated by the Vascular Disease Foundation (www.vdf.org), a national, not-for-profit section 501(c)(3) organization. The P.A.D. Coalition seeks to improve the prevention, early detection, treatment, and rehabilitation of people with, or at risk for, P.A.D.

The P.A.D. Coalition is supported by the following national sponsors: the Bristol-Myers Squibb/Sanofi Pharmaceuticals Partnership; Cordis Endovascular, a division of Cordis Corporation; Bard Peripheral Vascular; BioMedix; Cook, Inc; Edwards Lifesciences; W.L. Gore and Associates; Medtronic; Omron; and Summit Doppler.

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