

ACC POLICY STATEMENT

Access to Cardiovascular Care and Related Issues

Ad Hoc Task Force on Access to Cardiovascular Care

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General Principles

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) reaffirms its commitment to access to appropriate and prompt cardiovascular care for all, including the underserved, traditionally inner city and rural. The ACC endorses the concept that all are provided with adequate insurance or other coverage for clinically appropriate health services, regardless of socioeconomic status. This medical care must be high quality and cost-effective, with appropriate participation and reimbursement of health care providers, thus meeting the needs of both patient and physician. If such a system is based on health care insurance, the ACC advocates the implementation of insurance that is community rated, portable, renewable, without exclusion for preexisting disease and available to all.

The ACC supports the concept of a health care system that recognizes the importance of evaluation and management of the patient while ensuring appropriate reimbursement for procedural cardiovascular services. The ACC favors reimbursement at an adequate rate for the care of all patients, including Medicaid and Medicare patients.

Basic Cardiovascular Services

The ACC is an essential participant in the definition of clinically appropriate cardiovascular services available to all persons.

Utilization

The ACC participates in monitoring the costs, value, frequency and volume of cardiovascular services, with critical

analysis of the components involved in the increasing use of cardiovascular services.

The ACC supports increased research by the National Institutes of Health and other organizations into the reasons for differences in utilization of health care procedures and quality of care in various populations in different regions and encourages its members to participate in this research.

The ACC provides educational programs/materials for cardiovascular specialists and supports educational programs/materials for primary care physicians on

1. Outcomes research analysis
2. Cost and value of care
3. Appropriate use of cardiovascular technology
4. Dissemination and utilization of guidelines

Efficiency of Resource Use

The ACC supports efficient utilization of resources to avoid costly duplication of services.

Cost Issues and Individual Physicians

The ACC encourages its members to

1. Provide voluntary medical services in their specialty to disadvantaged persons.
2. Become better informed about the cost of their clinical decisions.
3. Participate in the public discussion of our health care delivery system.
4. Actively review all charges for cardiovascular services that may contribute to limited access to cardiovascular care.
5. Educate individual patients, their families and the public on the importance of primary and secondary cardiovascular disease prevention, risk factor modification, healthy living habits and a realistic expectation of modern cardiologic

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care, including the management of patients with cardiovascular disease at the extremes of life.

6. Encourage members to ensure that health care benefits are available for their employees.

The ACC provides programs to educate its members on the economic implications of their clinical decisions.

Doctor–Patient Relationship

The ACC strongly urges that any health care system must maintain the unique and professional personal relationship between the physician and the patient, including the independence of the decision-making process between physician and patient. The system must maintain the right of the patient to choose his or her physician. The ACC discourages inappropriate interference in medical decision making by third parties who have little or no first-hand knowledge of a specific patient's medical problems. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the medical profession.

Technology Assessment

The ACC supports the development and careful assessment of new technologies and therapeutic agents in cardiovascular disease. The College supports the performance of appropriate controlled studies to evaluate the value of new technologies before their use becomes widespread.

Preventive Medicine

The ACC encourages support and reimbursement for preventive cardiology programs. The ACC supports the development of educational programs for its members in cardiovascular disease prevention and prevention programs for all Americans.

Ethics

The ACC affirms the ethical standards of practice as outlined in the 21st and 29th Bethesda Conferences: "Ethics in Cardiovascular Medicine" (1,2).

Legal System

The ACC actively supports medical liability reform to improve access to cardiovascular care.

References

1. Parmley WW. 21st Bethesda Conference: ethics in cardiovascular medicine, October 5–6, 1989. *J Am Coll Cardiol* 1990;16:1–36.
2. Parmley WW, Passamani ER. 29th Bethesda Conference: ethics in cardiovascular medicine, October 23–24, 1997. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. In press.