It seems so appropriate this year that the ACC.08 will take place in Chicago, a city whose big shoulders have carried the not-insignificant weight of much of America’s development, a city that has been the crossroads for our culture. The American College of Cardiology (ACC) has performed a similar role for cardiology, providing a home for cardiovascular (CV) professionals, no matter their specialty, nurturing their expertise and experience, and providing a place for sharing information, networking, and building the science of CV medicine. The positive results of the ACC’s approach are evidenced in our guidelines and other quality documents, education products and programs, the National Cardiovascular Data Registry (NCDR™), and successful advocacy efforts. For our patients, our approach has resulted in increased survival rates and better quality of life.

The strength of the ACC’s integrated culture comes to bear at an important time for our profession as we are caught in the surge of a push for health care reform amid calls for cost effectiveness and quality reporting. Because the ACC has taken a leadership role in addressing quality-of-care issues, we are seated at the table with legislators, regulators, and payers as discussions take place on issues that could affect our ability to provide optimal care for our patients. Our continued efforts at defining, measuring, and promoting quality of care will keep us at the table and strengthen the impact of our messages.

How does this relate to ACC.08? Simply put, the goal of ACC.08 is to provide CV professionals with more tools to measure and ensure quality of care at the individual patient and practitioner level. In addition to the late-breaking, extensive science and other program components that integrate outcomes research into clinical practice with sessions that interpret and apply the science, attendees will find another program component—quality assessment.

As part of each session, we have asked program co-chairs and presenters to address the specific quality issues related to their topics to provide the guidance and structure for measuring success. Measuring quality of care needs to start at the most basic level, essentially an assessment of the results for each patient. How does each of us measure our level of success with a patient’s treatment? Do we look at what worked with each individual patient, or do we focus on the overall practice results? The goal of ACC.08 is to provide the tools needed to measure success at the individual level.

Quality receives additional emphasis with the new Spotlight—Practice Innovation: Driving Revenue, Quality, and Value—and a new Quality of Care and Outcomes Assessment Track. Our goal is to open dialogues about quality and its measurement to help attendees think about this in the context of their own work and perhaps define more or better measurements of quality in their specialties.

The quality story is not the only new element at ACC.08. The ACC’s position as home for many CV specialties incurs the responsibility to ensure that the needs of different groups are being met. Those who work in congenital heart disease and pediatric cardiology will find a special Spotlight devoted to them. Congenital Cardiology Solu-
tions (CCS.08) starts on Sunday, March 30, and concludes on Tuesday, April 1, with an entire day devoted to live interventional cases and surrounding care issues. Other Spotlight Sessions will include Clinical Cardiology, Hypertension & Prevention, Integrated Imaging, Vascular Disease, and Electrophysiology, which will include live case presentations this year.

Other cardiovascular societies will meet at the ACC.08 crossroads in Chicago, too, joining the ACC for symposia on lipids, outcomes issues related to race and ethnicity, and other topics. A joint symposium with national cardiovascular societies is also planned. Running concurrently with ACC.08, the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions has joined its annual scientific session with the ACC’s i2 Summit meeting for interventional cardiologists. Cardiac care associate members will also find more extensive programming and convenient weekend scheduling for those who are unable to attend the full meeting.

The individual professional and patient are the focus of ACC.08’s extensive programming; however, the overall driver for the program is our responsibility to CV professionals and their ability to ensure the best quality of care for patients.

No matter our specialty, we will all come to Chicago to network, share, and learn from the best. Each of us may come with different learning agendas, but we all play significant roles in making this meeting a success, ensuring that the science is applied appropriately in practice, and that research continues to reveal new and better ways to treat CV disease. ACC.08 takes place March 29 to April 1, 2008. It will be the crossroads where all CV professionals meet to learn from each other and to pursue the knowledge that will ensure the most balanced and appropriate care for their patients. We hope to see you there.

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