

## Government Funding for Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screenings

Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of sudden death in men over 60.<sup>1</sup> More than one million people are living with undiagnosed AAA<sup>2</sup>, and **only 10-25% of people will survive if the AAA ruptures.**<sup>3-6</sup> A simple ultrasound screening could help save these lives.

It is estimated that at least **95% of all AAAs can be managed and treated if found early.**<sup>2</sup> While ultrasound screenings are highly accurate and inexpensive, limited public access means that most at-risk patients won't get screened this year.

The Problem	Risk Factors	Critical Milestone	What You Can Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AAAA screenings are offered as part of the <i>Welcome to Medicare Physical Exam</i>, but required within the first 12 months of entering Medicare and only eligible for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Men who have smoked at least 100 cigarettes</li> <li>○ Men and women with a family history of AAA</li> </ul> </li> <li>• This means that if individuals are not screened within the first year of coverage, Medicare will not reimburse. As a result, <u>less than 10,000 beneficiaries were screened in 2007</u><sup>7</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age – 60+</li> <li>• Gender – men</li> <li>• Family history of AAA</li> <li>• History of smoking</li> <li>• Clogged arteries</li> <li>• High blood pressure</li> <li>• High cholesterol</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congress is reviewing legislation that will unlink AAA screening from the <i>Welcome to Medicare Physical Exam</i> and extend the one-time benefit to at-risk 65-75 year old Medicare beneficiaries</li> <li>• AAA screenings are non-invasive, highly accurate and inexpensive. The Medicare payment for AAA screening is less than that of digital screening mammography and substantially less than colonoscopy screening<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact your U.S. Representative and encourage them to support H.R. 1213 – the Screening Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms Very Efficiently (SAAAVE) Act of 2009 <a href="http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-1213">http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-1213</a></li> </ul>

### Help Save Lives from AAA

1. Find out more about AAA! Visit [www.FindtheAAAAnswers.org](http://www.FindtheAAAAnswers.org)
2. Take an active role in your diagnosis! Ask your doctor if you're at-risk
3. Get screened! Find a preventive health screening in your community
4. Take action! Contact your U.S. Representative to ask for their support of H.R. 1213 (SAAAVE 2009)

#### References:

- <sup>1</sup> Ohki T, Veith FJ. Endovascular Repair of Ruptured, AAAs In treating AAAs, endovascular repair may hold the key over open repair to lowering mortality. *Endovascular Today*. January 2004;47-51.
- <sup>2</sup> Society for Vascular Surgery. Protect Yourself From An AAA Rupture. [http://www.vascularweb.org/patients/prevention/aaa\\_rupture.html](http://www.vascularweb.org/patients/prevention/aaa_rupture.html). Accessed August 3, 2009.
- <sup>3</sup> Mealy K, Salman A. The true incidence of ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysms. *Eur J Vasc Surg* 1988;2:405-8.
- <sup>4</sup> Johansen K, Kohler TR, Nicholls SC, et al. Ruptured abdominal aortic aneurysm: the Harborview experience. *J Vasc Surg* 1991;13:240-5; discussion 245-7.
- <sup>5</sup> Heikkinen M, Salenius J, Zeitlin R, et al. The fate of AAA patients referred electively to vascular surgical unit. *Scand J Surg* 2002;91:345-52.
- <sup>6</sup> Brown PM, Pattenden R, Vernoooy C, Zelt DT, Gutelius JR. Selective management of abdominal aortic aneurysms in a prospective measurement program. *J Vasc Surg*. 1996;23:213-220.
- <sup>7</sup> Society for Vascular Ultrasound. Co-Sponsors Singing on for New 2009 Version of SAAAVE Act in Congress. [http://www.svunet.org/advocacy/2009/0609\\_new-version-SAAAVE.html](http://www.svunet.org/advocacy/2009/0609_new-version-SAAAVE.html). June 2006. Accessed August 14, 2009.

---

<sup>8</sup> Society for Vascular Surgery. [http://www.symb.org/professional\\_practice/090520%20NAComments2SenFinance.pdf](http://www.symb.org/professional_practice/090520%20NAComments2SenFinance.pdf). Accessed August 14, 2009.

# # #