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**Four-Year Results of National Screening Program for Abdominal
Aortic Aneurysm Show Twenty-Five Percent of Participants Are
At Risk for Silent Killer**
Society of Interventional Radiology Legs For Life® Screening Program

Phoenix, Arizona (March 29, 2004) - - A national screening program for abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) found one in four participants were at risk for an aneurysm and one in 20, in fact, had an aneurysm. More than five percent of the aneurysms found were large enough to be in danger of rupturing. The four-year AAA results from the Legs For Life® National Screening Program for Vascular Disease, are being presented today at the 29th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR).

Of the aneurysms detected, 5.3 percent were larger than 5 cm, considered at greater risk for rupture and likely requiring treatment. Another 22.5 percent were larger than 3.5 cm, and, although not likely to be at immediate risk for rupture, should be watched.

Death from AAA can be avoided if the aneurysm is detected and treated before it ruptures. Treatment includes open surgical repair or a less invasive technique called endovascular repair performed by an interventional radiologist. In a post-evaluation survey of people screened through Legs For Life, 11 percent had a medical procedure or saw their doctor based on the AAA screening result. At least 60 percent of those surveyed said they were more likely to recognize risk factors associated with AAA than before their Legs For Life AAA screening.

Since 2000, nearly 46,000 people have been screened for AAA as part of the annual Legs For Life screening program, founded by the Society of Interventional Radiology in 1997. As vascular experts, interventional radiologists treat arteriosclerosis, "hardening of the arteries," throughout the body. People with risk factors for vascular disease are also at risk for abdominal aortic aneurysm, as well as peripheral vascular disease, stroke and heart disease. The screening involves a risk-assessment questionnaire for vascular disease. Those people found to be at risk, then participate in the screening, which usually involves a painless ultrasound exam.

"Data have shown a significant amount of undiagnosed or under-diagnosed vascular disease in people over age 50. The public health impact of the Legs For Life program is immeasurable," said Katharine Krol, MD, interventional radiologist, Indianapolis, Indiana.

AAA accounts for more than 15,000 deaths annually and affects an estimated 5 percent to 7 percent of people 60 or older. It is the 17th leading cause of death in the United States. AAA affects the main artery from the heart, which can develop a weak spot that bulges like a balloon and, if undetected, continue to grow larger and burst. Often, a person with AAA experiences no symptoms until the aneurysm bursts. Once an aneurysm has ruptured, the chances of survival are low, with 80 to 90 percent of all ruptured aneurysms resulting in death.

Risk factors for AAA include age (60 or older), smoking, a family history of AAA and/or other medical conditions that affect the blood vessels, such as heart disease or diabetes. Men also are more likely to develop the condition than women.

About Legs for Life

Legs For Life is a head-to-toe national screening program for cardiovascular conditions including peripheral vascular disease (PVD), abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA), stroke and venous disease. More than 400 Legs For Life screenings are held every September and nearly 300,000 people have been screened since the program began in 1998. Legs For Life is the country's largest, longest running, and most inclusive national vascular disease screening program.

Legs For Life was founded by the Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR) in 1997. Collaborating organizations include the American Diabetes Association, the American Radiological Nurses Association, the Council on Cardiovascular Radiology and Intervention of the American Heart Association, and the Society for Vascular Nursing. Program funding is administered by the Society of Interventional Radiology Foundation.

About the Society of Interventional Radiology

An estimated 5,000 people are attending the Society of Interventional Radiology's 29th Annual Scientific Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. Interventional radiology is the medical specialty devoted to advancing patient care through the innovative integration of clinical and imaging-based diagnosis and minimally invasive therapy. Interventional radiologists are physicians who specialize in minimally invasive, targeted treatments performed using imaging for guidance to treat disease non-surgically through the blood vessels or through the skin. Interventional radiologists pioneered modern medicine with the invention of angioplasty and the catheter-delivered stent, which were first used to treat peripheral arterial disease. Interventional radiology procedures are a major advance in medicine that do not require large incisions – only a nick in the skin – and offer less risk, less pain and shorter recovery times compared to open surgery. More information can be found at www.SIRweb.org.

Interviews are available by contacting the press office on site at 602-514-7890.