

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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Contact

Maryann Verrillo, (703) 460-5572

Diane Shnitzler, (703) 460-5582

comm@SIRweb.org

Peripheral Arterial Disease: Simple Quiz Keeps You Circulating ***Interventional Radiologists Recommend That Seniors, African-Americans, Diabetics Take Online Quiz, Get Screened If Needed***

FAIRFAX, Va.—As recent medical studies continue to highlight the seriousness of peripheral arterial disease (or PAD) and its association with heart attack, stroke and early mortality^{1,2}, the Society of Interventional Radiology Foundation recommends that older Americans, smokers and diabetics take its free, online self-assessment quiz. This simple quiz—along with appropriate diagnosis and treatment—can prevent PAD from getting worse and help reduce risk of heart disease, stroke and early death.

PAD, which affects an estimated 10 million people in the United States, occurs when plaque accumulates in arteries that supply blood to areas of the body other than the heart and brain. Since plaque blocks the smaller leg arteries first, PAD is considered a red flag for several life-threatening vascular diseases, such as heart attack (the number one killer in this country) and stroke; it can also result in the loss of limb(s). Symptoms—such as leg pain while walking, numbness and tingling in the lower legs and feet, coldness in the lower legs and feet, or ulcers or sores on the legs or feet that don't heal—could be PAD warning signs. The disease's progression results in death for about one-third of patients.

Seniors may typically dismiss warning symptoms as signs of getting older; however, just like clogged arteries in the heart, clogged arteries in the legs mean that one could be at risk for heart attack or stroke. African-Americans are twice as likely to develop PAD³. And, individuals with diabetes are especially susceptible to PAD because diabetes affects every vascular bed in the body and increases the risk for accelerated formation of plaque build-up in the lining of the arteries—placing 18.2 million Americans at risk.

The online quiz at SIRF's Legs for Life® Web site (www.legsforlife.org) helps assess health, family and lifestyle risks for PAD. The higher one's score, the more important it is for that individual to discuss the quiz's results with his or her doctor.

Legs for Life®—a community health and public information program of SIR Foundation—began a decade ago because interventional radiologists—vascular experts who treat PAD—recognized that the disease is a major public health problem with a growing incidence, yet awareness among the general public and nonvascular health care providers is low. The primary goals of Legs for Life® are to educate the public, primary care physicians and the medical community; identify patients at risk through screenings; and strengthen collaborative relationships among health care professionals who treat this condition.

Legs for Life® offers a free national screening program dedicated to improving the cardiovascular health of the community with the early detection of PAD during September's national PAD awareness month. In September, limited free testing is available for PAD at Legs for Life® sites around the country. During a screening, the ankle brachial index (ABI)—a simple and painless test—is used; the ABI compares the blood pressure in the legs to the blood pressure in the arms to determine how well the blood is flowing and if additional tests are needed. A recent report has shown that the ABI may improve the accuracy of cardiovascular risk prediction beyond the traditional Framingham Risk Score.⁴

In many cases, PAD can be treated with medication (such as blood thinners or drugs that dilate an affected artery), lifestyle changes (such as smoking cessation), diet and a structured exercise program. With early detection, patients could see an interventional radiologist when intervention is most effective and less invasive treatments are an option. If needed, interventional radiologists can perform minimally invasive angioplasty and/or stenting to open a blocked artery in the leg and restore blood flow.

To take the free PAD risk assessment quiz to review the results with one's own doctor, visit www.legsforlife.org. PAD screenings can be held at any time; however, in September, during national PAD awareness month, more interventional radiologists provide PAD screening at sites through Legs for Life®. *Please note: Legs for Life® sites provide a limited number of screenings; advance appointments are required. Many*

interventional radiologists offer year-round screening by appointment instead; a link to this information is provided on the Legs for Life® site (www.legsforlife.org). Additionally, individuals can find local interventional radiologists by visiting the Society of Interventional Radiology's Web site (www.SIRweb.org) and clicking on its Doctor Finder (choose "Peripheral Arterial Disease" in the Area of Expertise list). For a patient video about peripheral arterial disease, visit SIR's Web site at www.SIRweb.org/news/videoClips.shtml.

References

¹ "Association of Asymptomatic Peripheral Arterial Disease With Vascular Events in Patients With Stroke or Transient Ischemic Attack," *Stroke*, Aug. 27, 2009

² "One-Year Cardiovascular Event Rates in Outpatients With Atherothrombosis," *JAMA*. 2007; 297(11):1197-1206. (Ph. Gabriel Steg, Deepak L Bhatt, Peter WF Wilson et. al.)

³ *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*, November 2005

⁴ "Ankle Brachial Index Combined With Framingham Risk Score to Predict Cardiovascular Events and Mortality: A Meta-analysis," *Ankle Brachial Index Collaboration, JAMA*, 2209; 300(2):197-208.

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About Legs for Life

Since September 1998, Legs for Life® has been held annually by the Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR) and the Society of Interventional Radiology Foundation. It is the largest, longest running and most inclusive national vascular disease screening program in the United States. Nearly 322,000 people have been screened to date, with one in four found to be at risk for PAD. Select sites will also screen for abdominal aortic aneurysm, stroke risk and venous disease.

The Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR) is a founding partner of the PAD Coalition which, along with the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), runs the national PAD awareness campaign in September called "Stay in Circulation: Take Steps to Learn About PAD." Visit www.legsforlife.org.

About the Society of Interventional Radiology Foundation

SIR Foundation is a scientific foundation dedicated to fostering research and education in interventional radiology for the purposes of advancing scientific knowledge, increasing the number of skilled investigators in interventional radiology and developing innovative therapies that lead to improved patient care and quality of life.

Interventional radiologists are vascular experts who invented angioplasty and the catheter-delivered stent, which were first used in the legs to treat peripheral arterial disease. They provide vascular disease management and specialize in minimally invasive treatments. Visit www.SIRFoundation.org.

Local interviews, medical illustrations and broadcast-quality video footage are available by contacting SIR's communications department by phone at (703) 460-5572 or via e-mail at mverrillo@SIRweb.org.