

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **A New Reason to Quit for the Great American Smokeout**

*Public Unaware that Leg Pain from Peripheral Arterial Disease is Caused by Smoking*

Fairfax, VA (November 14, 2007) – Most people are well aware of the risk of cancer from smoking, but few realize the damage smoking causes throughout the body's vascular system. Smoking damages the blood vessels and smokers are at risk for all vascular diseases including peripheral arterial disease (PAD), stroke, heart attack, abdominal aortic aneurysm and subsequent death. This year for the Great American Smokeout interventional radiologists are urging Americans to quit. As vascular experts these doctors see first-hand the damage that smoking causes to the arteries.

The disabling leg pain that some smokers suffer from can be caused by PAD, clogged arteries in the legs that limit their ability to walk ordinary distances. "Smokers are always amazed that in many cases there is a marked turn around in their ability to walk if they quit smoking. They realize - my gosh, I didn't have to live like this," says interventional radiologist Ted Chambers, MD. Just like clogged arteries in the heart, clogged arteries in the legs also increase the risk for a heart attack or stroke. Often, depending on the severity of the disease, an interventional radiologist will recommend a treatment plan for patients with PAD that includes quitting smoking and a supervised exercise program to increase the distance they can walk.

"It amazes me that on cigarette packs you'll see warnings about emphysema, birth defects and lung cancer, but there is no warning about peripheral arterial disease, yet those of us that treat vascular disease know there is a strong association between smoking and peripheral arterial disease," says Chambers.

### **How Smoking Affects the Arteries**

In a healthy blood vessel, the inner lining of the arteries, known as the endothelium, constricts and dilates with blood flow. Smoking damages the endothelium, making arteries prone to spasms and deposits of diffuse plaque that diminish their ability to dilate properly. This condition is known as atherosclerosis, often called "hardening of the arteries." Atherosclerosis is a gradual process in which cholesterol and scar tissue build up, forming a substance called plaque that clogs the blood vessels and makes them less elastic. Clogged arteries in the legs can cause severe leg pain and limit mobility.

### **About The Society of Interventional Radiology**

Interventional radiologists are board-certified vascular specialists who offer minimally invasive, targeted treatments. They offer the most in-depth knowledge of the least invasive treatments available coupled with diagnostic and clinical experience across all specialties. They use X-rays, MRI and other imaging to advance a catheter in the body,

usually in an artery, to treat at the source of the disease nonsurgically. As the inventors of angioplasty and the catheter-delivered stent, which were first used in the legs to treat peripheral arterial disease, interventional radiologists pioneered minimally invasive modern medicine. Visit [www.SIRweb.org](http://www.SIRweb.org) for more information and a directory of interventional radiologists.

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