

Heart Advocacy Groups Announce First-Ever Coalition Urging Federal Government Action to Stop Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Coalition Releases Results of National Survey on Leading Cardiovascular Killer: American Public Strongly Supports Increased Federal Funding to Stop SCA

(DENVER, CO - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE) – More than 25 leading heart advocacy groups today announced the formation of the Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) Coalition – the very first coalition dedicated to advancing increased research, awareness and educational efforts to address the nation's number one cardiovascular killer. The Coalition, announced as part of Heart Rhythm 2007, the Society's 28th Annual Scientific Sessions, will urge Congress and the federal agencies involved in national health policies and programs, to devote more resources to greater public awareness of SCA, research and access to life-saving therapies.

"Sudden Cardiac Arrest is a leading cause of death in this country, taking the lives of more than 250,000 people each year – more than breast cancer, lung cancer, stroke or AIDS," said Dr. Dwight Reynolds, president of the Heart Rhythm Society, one of the founding members of the SCA Coalition. "It occurs abruptly and without warning, and two-thirds of SCA deaths occur without any prior indications of heart disease. But the truth is that SCA is not always a random event – yet even those of us in the medical community do not always have the tools to properly identify those at risk and prevent attacks."

SCA occurs when the heart stops working and no blood can be pumped to the rest of the body. In essence, the heart's electrical system malfunctions. One common misconception among the general public is that SCA is the same as a heart attack. It is not a heart attack, also known as a myocardial infarction, which is actually when a blockage in a blood vessel interrupts the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the heart, causing the heart muscle to die. 95% of all victims of SCA die because they do not receive life-saving defibrillation within 4 – 6 minutes, before brain and permanent death start to occur.

To address this public health crisis, the SCA Coalition is made up of advocates from across the spectrum - from physicians and allied health professionals, to patients and caregivers, to first responders and athletic trainers (see attached list). These groups come together under the Coalition to use their collective strength as a national voice to stop sudden cardiac arrest.

[QUOTE FROM YOUR ORGANIZATION]

Joined by the rest of the SCA Coalition members and a local survivor of SCA, Dr. Reynolds spoke of the life-saving possibilities of the Coalition's work. "As with any public health crisis, the U.S. government and its depth of medical resources offers the best hope for arming the medical community with the research and knowledge it needs, and reaching the American public to provide a level of awareness that can make a difference. The government has already made great strides in research, awareness, and treatment advances for many of our nation's major health threats – like breast cancer, lung cancer, stroke and AIDS. But now with the passion and hard work of the SCA Coalition, we can focus the government's attention and significant resources on a killer that takes more lives each year than any of those diseases."

Over the next year, the SCA Coalition will encourage the introduction and passage of an Omnibus bill that, if passed, will provide the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services with the resources and the imperative to develop and implement a comprehensive education and research program for SCA. This will include appropriations for medical screening and tracking studies, as well as public awareness and education campaigns. The bill will also include a resolution to create a National Sudden Cardiac Arrest Week, to set aside time each year to focus national public attention on this deadly killer.

"With so many lives in jeopardy, the American public should know their own risk of SCA, be able to identify warning signs and seek medical attention before it is too late. The Coalition's work to achieve increased federal funding for research, education and access to treatment would bring us a long way towards saving lives," stated Diane Canova, executive director of the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association, a patient advocacy group, and co-chair of the SCA Coalition.

"As we set about on our mission, clear in the vision that our ultimate goal was to stop SCA, we first went to the American public to ask them about their awareness, their concerns, and whether they thought it was time for the federal government to use its vast resources to stop this killer. Their answer? A resounding 'Yes!'"

The SCA Coalition's national public survey of likely voters, demonstrated that a critical mass of Americans are concerned about the threat of SCA to their families, the lack of awareness of warning signs, risk factors, and treatment options, and the need for more research on sudden cardiac arrest. Some key findings include:

- SCA is misunderstood by voters – yet they agree that more awareness is needed:
 - 45.5% believe SCA occurs when the heart is blocked from working (which is actually a heart attack); while 43.1% know it is when the heart stops working abruptly (SCA).
 - But that confusion leads 93.5% of voters believe it is important to raise awareness of SCA.
- Knowing that SCA occurs when the heart stops working abruptly and without warning, 73.6% are concerned that they or a family member is at risk of having SCA in the next five years.

- Demand for more federal funding is high: 51.4% believe that the medical research community, including the federal government, is dedicating too little funding for sudden cardiac arrest research, education and treatment.
- 77.1% favor increasing federal funding for SCA research, education and treatment.

“Three years ago, I was simply talking on the phone at my office when I experienced sudden cardiac arrest. Fortunately, due to a life-saving shock from an AED, I was one of the few lucky ones,” said Judy Sudmeier, a Denver nurse who survived SCA nearly three years ago. “The American public clearly already recognizes the importance of learning more about SCA, achieving important research so our doctors can identify our risk, and ensuring we have greater access to treatment. We are thrilled for their broad support, but those of us who literally almost lost our lives and the families of those who tragically did, know all too well what the work of this Coalition will mean for Americans. I am honored to be a part of this wonderful effort.”

[CLOSING QUOTE FROM YOUR ORGANIZATION]

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The SCA Coalition is comprised of 30 organizations passionate about preventing sudden cardiac arrest deaths through legislative initiatives that lead to greater public awareness, research and access to life-saving therapies. The SCA Coalition is focused on national issues that have the opportunity to bring about meaningful change that will save lives.