



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Consensus Document Available on Stent-Graft Treatment**

Each year, approximately 45,000 people die annually in the United States from diseases of the thoracic aorta and its branches. While open cardiovascular surgical graft replacement of the descending thoracic aorta has been the standard therapy for more than 50 years, endovascular stent-grafting, a minimally invasive procedure, is now being utilized for the treatment of diseases of the descending thoracic aorta.

Because of the increasing use of endovascular stent grafts; limited information available regarding the long-term function of stent-grafts; and the absence of randomized trials comparing stent-grafting with open graft replacement, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons Endovascular Surgery Task Force has released an expert consensus document on the treatment of descending thoracic aortic disease using contemporary open surgical techniques and stent-grafts. The consensus document was published as a supplement to the December 2007 *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery* and has been endorsed by The Society of Thoracic Surgeons and the American Association for Thoracic Surgery, the largest organizations representing cardiothoracic surgeons in North America.

The authors spent two years examining the literature and writing the document, which provides background on stent-grafting, information on the natural history and growth rate of aneurysms and other disorders of the descending thoracic aorta and the results of open operation and endovascular stent-grafting. A synopsis is also given of currently available stent-grafts, along with the current indications and contraindications for their use.

The document explains that as with all operative procedures, the decision to recommend treatment of a patient with descending thoracic aortic pathology must balance the risks of intervention against the patient's prognosis, quality of life, and life expectancy. The first and most important decision point for these patients is whether or not any treatment is warranted instead of continued expectant observation and medical control of risk factors. Physicians and surgeons with the most training, experience, and expertise in treating patients with thoracic aortic diseases must play a prominent role in this first step because they know best the natural history of the various disease processes. Furthermore, with two therapeutic options available, the risks and benefits of the two techniques, as well as the expected durability of the aortic repair, must also be taken into account. Currently, there are no randomized trials that have compared the outcomes of the two procedures in comparable patients.

"The FDA has approved the use of stent-grafts only for patients with aneurysms of the descending thoracic aorta; however, stent-grafts are being used for other disorders of the descending aorta including aortic dissection and traumatic aortic disruption," said Dr. Nicholas T. Kouchoukos, Task Force Chair and one of the authors of the document. "These are 'off-label' uses and this document was prepared because we wanted to determine where stent-grafts have a role in the management of all treatable thoracic aortic disease, based on currently available information, and where they do not."

"We anticipate that this document will be of value to all physicians who care for patients with thoracic aortic disease, including primary care physicians, internists, cardiologists, vascular specialists and surgeons," Dr. Kouchoukos said. "It represents the consensus of a group of surgeons with extensive experience in the surgical treatment of thoracic aortic disease"

The consensus statement is available online at [www.sts.org](http://www.sts.org). A copy can be obtained by contacting Sharon Porta at [sporta@sts.org](mailto:sporta@sts.org) or (312) 202-5844.

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*The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 5,400 surgeons, researchers, and allied health professionals worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible heart, lung, esophageal and other surgical procedures for the chest. Founded in 1964, the mission of STS is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research and advocacy. The STS Annual Meeting is the premier education event in cardiothoracic surgery.*