

JANUARY 2021

Advocacy Monthly



What topics would you like to read about in the next edition of *Advocacy Monthly*? The Society would like your feedback and suggestions in order to provide you with the most relevant resources and information. Please send your feedback to communications@sts.org.

CMS Expands Transcatheter Mitral Coverage

In what represents a huge regulatory victory for cardiothoracic surgeons and their patients, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) [released its final national coverage determination](#) (NCD) for transcatheter mitral valve repair, now known as transcatheter edge-to-edge repair (TEER). The NCD will help ensure quality outcomes for a broad group of eligible patients because it:

- Extends Medicare reimbursement to include patients with functional mitral regurgitation
- Preserves national TEER coverage for patients with degenerative mitral regurgitation
- Maintains the requirement that TEER sites submit data to a national clinical outcomes registry, namely the STS/ACC TVT Registry

The original proposal indicated that such registry data collection would no longer be required. This would have led to expanded exclusion criteria, so STS and other cardiovascular societies fought hard against this stipulation.

Society Maps 2021 Advocacy Strategy

STS has released its [advocacy priorities for 2021](#). This plan will provide a framework for discussion topics with legislators and other stakeholders. In selecting the advocacy initiatives, the Society considered the current political environment, the STS mission, and relevance to cardiothoracic surgeons and their patients. The 2021 priorities include:

- Maintaining patient access to cardiothoracic surgery
 - Preventing damaging cuts to Medicare reimbursement
 - Addressing the cardiothoracic surgery workforce shortage
- Promoting health equity
- Obtaining Medicare claims data to use with the STS National Database and preserving Coverage with Evidence Development as a Medicare coverage option
- Preserving health care research funding
- Strengthening support systems for patients with congenital heart disease

Do you want to get involved in advocacy and health policy? Become an [STS Key Contact](#) and have a direct impact on timely legislative issues that affect the

specialty. The program helps members stay informed, build relationships, and engage with lawmakers. For more information, contact advocacy@sts.org.

STS Applauds Opening Up Medical Training Pipeline

The Society joined the Association of American Medical Colleges and other organizations in signing a [letter](#) that thanked Congressional leaders for supporting a historic increase to the Medicare graduate medical education (GME) program. The authorization of 1,000 new GME residency positions—included in a massive year-end spending and COVID-19 relief bill signed last month—was the first increase to the program in nearly 25 years. Priority will be given to training programs in rural areas, hospitals that are training residents over their caps, states with new medical schools, and facilities that provide care for underserved communities.

Register for STS 2021: Don't Miss the Advocacy Session

Tomorrow, the virtual [STS Annual Meeting](#) will bring together members of the cardiothoracic surgery team worldwide to experience the latest science and practice in the specialty. In addition to thought-provoking lectures, cutting-edge research findings, and engaging debates, as well as networking and wellness events, STS 2021 (January 29-31) will feature several interactive “Ask the Experts” sessions, including **“Medicare Cuts and Advocacy—How We Got Here and What Comes Next.”** This session, taking place on Sunday, January 31, at 8:30 a.m. ET, will be moderated by Dr. Keith Naunheim and allow attendees to have direct conversations with Drs. Alan Speir and Peter Smith in a peer-to-peer discussion format. Also, the STS Government Relations team will be on hand at the STS-PAC and Advocacy booth in the STS Pavilion. [Registration](#) for the meeting is available through Sunday.





**The Society
of Thoracic
Surgeons**

633 N. Saint Clair St., Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611
312-202-5800



Click [here](#) to unsubscribe or change your email preferences.
Click [here](#) if you are having trouble viewing this message.