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# **STS Advocacy Priorities 2022**

## **Ensure Patient Access to Cardiothoracic Surgical Care**

- **Seek Long-term Solution to Medicare Physician Payment System & Mitigate Cuts to Medicare Reimbursement**

In December 2020 and 2021, Congress mitigated devastating cuts to Medicare reimbursement for cardiothoracic surgery and other health professionals. As a result, cardiothoracic surgeons will still see cuts, albeit reduced ones, during a global pandemic that has killed over five million people including over 800,000 Americans. The current Medicare payment model is broken, and STS will pursue a longterm solution to the problem that will rectify the underlying policy issues that cause annual cuts to reimbursement.

- **Address the Cardiothoracic Surgery Workforce Shortage**

Support legislation that would: raise the cap on Medicare-supported residency positions; provide deferred loan repayment for specialties with long training periods; promote medical simulation technologies; examine geographic and economic factors leading to the maldistribution of residency positions across the United States.

## **Ensure Medicare Payment Models Adequately Meet the Needs of Cardiothoracic Surgery**

- Ensure cardiothoracic surgeons can participate in Advanced Alternative Payment Models (APMs).
- Collaborate with regulatory officials to ensure payment models appropriately measure quality and performance for cardiothoracic surgery.
- Continue oversight of MACRA implementation, including the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS).
- Encourage Congress to exercise its oversight authorities.

## **Pursue Health Equity in Health Care**

- Work with federal policymakers and outside partners to research and promote racial and socioeconomic equity in access to health care and health care outcomes.
- Support priorities outlined in the STS Health Equity Policy Paper.

## **Preserve Coverage with Evidence Development Policy (CED) & Obtain Medicare Claims Data to Use with STS National Database**

- Ensure clinician-led clinical databases are able to access federal health plan claims data to facilitate outcomes-based research that improves health care quality and cost efficiency.
- Support the passage of legislation, including the Cures 2.0 Act (provided we agree with all provisions contained therein), which provides registry access to federal health plan claims data.
- Encourage the preservation of Medicare coverage with evidence development and its inclusion in the Cures 2.0 Act.

## **Preserve Health Care Research Funding**

- Continue working to preserve and support health care research funding for federal agencies, such as but not limited to, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), National Institutes of Health (NIH).
- Advocate for health care research on the effects of violent crimes including those committed by firearms.