



Ambulatory Surgery
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MEDIA RELEASE

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ASCA SUPPORTS BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO EXPAND COLORECTAL SCREENING

Legislation aims to increase access to vital life-saving screenings

WASHINGTON, DC, March 15, 2012 — The Ambulatory Surgery Center Association (ASCA) announced today their support for the recently introduced bipartisan legislation (H.R. 4120), sponsored by U.S. Representative Charlie Dent (PA-15). The legislation would correct an oversight in current law that requires Medicare beneficiaries to cover the cost of their co-payment for a “free” screening colonoscopy if a polyp is discovered during the procedure.

“Colonoscopies save lives - with recent studies indicating they reduce colorectal cancer by mortality by as much as 53 percent,” stated ASCA Executive Director William Prentice. “Ambulatory surgery centers serve as a vital provider of these life-saving screenings and we applaud Congressman Dent’s efforts in ensuring more Americans have affordable access.”

There is no way for a patient to know in advance of a screening colonoscopy whether a polyp will be discovered and removed during the procedure. This leads to uncertainty as to whether a co-payment will be required and can dissuade a patient from having the screening performed.

“This legislation is vital in raising awareness for the importance of correcting current law to guarantee that patients across the nation continue to have access to preventive services and, in turn, save lives,” concluded Prentice.

According to the American Cancer Society, deaths from colorectal cancer have been declining for more than two decades, mostly because of screenings, including colonoscopies and other tests. People of average risk of colon cancer ages 50 to 75 should get screened, but only about half in the United States are screened as recommended.

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About ASCs: ASCs are an integral part of the health care system, providing critical access to surgical and diagnostic care, including preventive services. As essential Medicare providers of surgical and cancer screening services, ASCs perform more than 40 percent of Medicare colonoscopies.