



FEDERATED AMBULATORY SURGERY ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMBULATORY SURGERY EXPERT TELLS PRESIDENT BUSH WHY A GROWING NUMBER OF AMERICANS CHOOSE AMBULATORY SURGERY CENTERS FOR OUTPATIENT SURGERY

President Bush Says ASCs Are on “Leading Edge of Health Care”

WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 16, 2006) — Jerry Henderson, a registered nurse and board member of the Federated Ambulatory Surgery Association, spoke today at the Department of Health and Human Services where President George W. Bush continued a week-long campaign to draw public attention to his health care agenda.

Henderson, invited by the White House to address transparency in health care, outlined for the President the growing importance of ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) and explained why more and more Americans are opting for surgery in these more patient-friendly environments.

The White House has asked HHS to oversee the creation of a voluntary program that would publicize the prices health care providers charge for their services. Henderson said such transparency was key to providing better patient care while saving both individuals and the American taxpayer money. She said that 80 percent of all surgeries in America today are outpatient and one out of every five of these takes place in an ambulatory surgery center such as the one she runs, the SurgiCenter of Baltimore, so the impact of greater transparency on surgery costs and quality would be enormous.

“As a nurse, I’ve seen first-hand how advances in medical technology have transformed surgeries that were once lengthy and complex procedures requiring hospitalization into safe, outpatient procedures that were less costly and much easier on patients,” she said. “But a lack of information, as well as restrictions on insurance coverage, often keep patients from knowing their options. They can’t make decisions that are truly informed about quality or cost and reimbursement regulations often keep them from following their doctor’s advice.”

FASA is supporting legislation that would put ASCs on the same Medicare payment system as hospitals and increase transparency. “Under the current Medicare system it is nearly impossible for patients to make even the most basic comparisons. And, of course, for the patient cost is only one of a whole host of benefits that include convenience, comfort and ‘customer’ service,” Henderson said.

In Ohio on Wednesday, President Bush said “the health care industry and the insurance industry needs to provide reliable information about prices and quality on common medical procedures.” FASA couldn’t agree more. The White House’s “price transparency” proposal is part of a larger effort to shift the health care system toward greater consumer involvement by making people more aware of and sensitive to the actual cost of medical care.

Henderson explained that the co-payment for Medicare beneficiaries is 20 percent of the cost of the procedure at an ASC compared to 40 percent out of the patient’s pocket at a hospital. And,

generally speaking, the costs of procedures at hospitals are higher which means the patient pays more. So, an ASC is less costly for an individual patient, but it's also less costly for the government. A recent study found that Medicare pays on average \$320 less per surgery when the procedure is performed in an ASC rather than a hospital outpatient department.

Mark McClellan, Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, has said "ASCs play a very important role in creating a modern, innovative health care system by providing care at a lower cost with better patient satisfaction. With the challenge of rising health care costs, it is clear to me that innovation and creativity in ASCs can make a big difference in the quality and cost of health care."

Kathy Bryant, FASA's President, said, "improved competition and greater transparency could produce better health care for everyone. ASCs are the model for the type of consumer-driven health care that the President supports."

The **Federated Ambulatory Surgery Association**, the nation's largest association of ambulatory surgery centers, is a national, nonprofit association representing the interests of those who operate and seek the services of ambulatory surgery centers throughout the nation. The organization represents almost 1,800 ASCs, the thousands of professionals who provide care and services in such centers and the patients who seek care there. Visit FASA online at www.fasa.org.

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To speak to FASA: Jerry Henderson will be available following the panel. Please contact Danielle DeForge at (202) 339-0111.