

AMERICAN COLLEGE of CARDIOLOGY

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June 25, 1999

The Honorable
Richard Durbin
364 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Sen. Durbin:

It has come to the attention of the American College of Cardiology (ACC) that you are considering offering an amendment to the Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill that would severely restrict the use of reprocessed medical devices. On behalf of more than 24,000 cardiovascular specialists, I wish to express the ACC's deep opposition to your amendment.

When it comes to treating patients, our number one concern is safety. The reprocessed medical devices used in diagnosing and treating cardiac patients are in fact safe and effective. In particular, the ACC is concerned about the effect your amendment will have on the use of reprocessed catheters, such as those used in electrophysiology. Solid, rigid catheters are used by cardiovascular specialists in electrophysiology for the placement and removal of pacemakers and implantable defibrillators. Generally, between two and six catheters are used during a single procedure, but it is not uncommon for as many as eight to be used. Now, these catheters cost between \$150 and \$1000 each. Reprocessed catheters are not only safe and effective, they are also cost efficient.

The catheters used in electrophysiology can be used safely, following sterilization, as many as five times, thereby greatly reducing costs. Concerns that reprocessed catheters could cause serious injury to patients are completely unfounded. There are cardiovascular specialists who have been using reprocessed catheters in their labs for more than 20 years and cannot cite a single instance where a reprocessed catheter has broke or caused infection. Simply stated, your amendment will unnecessarily increase health care costs and could potentially result in the closing of electrophysiology labs.

Generally speaking, your concern for patient safety is appreciated. The ACC simply questions the claims that reprocessed medical devices, particularly those used in cardiovascular medicine pose a danger to patients. Therefore, the ACC must oppose your amendment, as it will unjustifiably increase costs, and urges you not to seek its passage until a more detailed discussion about the issue can occur.

Sincerely,



Arthur Garson, Jr., M.D., F.A.C.C.
President

Cc: Sen. Edward Kennedy
Sen. William Frist
Sen. Jim M. Jeffords

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