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Society of Interventional Radiology Advances Global Definition of Specialty, Benefits Patients

A First: 41 International Societies Join SIR in Supporting Statement That Stresses Interventional Radiology's Importance in Medical Care for Patients, Outlines Identity and Scope of IR Practices Worldwide

FAIRFAX, Va.—The Society of Interventional Radiology, with the support of 41 international societies representing 10,000 interventional radiology doctors, has issued the first global statement defining interventional radiology—one designed to benefit medical treatment for individuals. The statement addresses the evolution, impact and future direction of this minimally invasive specialty, emphasizing the worldwide availability of this specialized medical care. The statement, the result of more than two years of collaborative work, is being co-published in August as a “Special Communications” in SIR’s Journal of Vascular and Interventional Radiology and in the Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiological Society of Europe’s journal.

“Until now, there has been no single document—no blueprint—defining interventional radiology that has had broad international support. It was time for interventional radiology to organize itself, worldwide, as a single family,” said SIR President James F. Benenati, M.D., FSIR, who represents the U.S. organization of nearly 4,500 doctors, scientists and allied health professionals dedicated to improving health care through minimally invasive treatments. Interventional radiologists offer the least invasive and most advanced treatment options for major health problems (including cancer, cardiovascular and venous disease, spine fractures, stroke and uterine fibroids), but many may not be aware of these advances, he noted.

In the United States, IR is a recognized subspecialty with its own board certification exam, and IR is defined by its strong tradition of innovation and adaptation. However, the need for a universal statement became evident because there are countries where interventional radiology may not be recognized formally as a “real” specialty or subspecialty, explained Benenati. “Continuously increasing numbers of patients are being treated by interventional radiologists—without the need for open invasive surgery, without the need for a scalpel. When you have an inclusive, multinational document that represents more than 10,000 doctors worldwide, it is hard to deny their existence,” added Benenati, an interventional radiologist and medical director for the Noninvasive Vascular Laboratory at Baptist Cardiac & Vascular Institute in Miami, Fla.

“Interventional radiology is a unique specialty distinct from all other radiologic, medical and surgical specialties. While IR has been helping patients for more than 40 years, it is still a relatively new specialty; however, it has become integral to the delivery of health care worldwide,” said the SIR president.

The “Global Statement Defining Interventional Radiology” puts into writing the basic elements of IR that apply to interventional radiologists anywhere in the world. It stresses that IR doctors “provide patient evaluation and management relevant to image-guided interventions in collaboration with other physicians or independently.”

The collaborative statement evolved over time, with input from IRs from nearly every continent. Work on the collaborative statement began two years ago by John A. Kaufman, M.D., FSIR, FCIRSE, then SIR president, and his European counterpart, Jim A. Reekers, M.D., FCIRSE, FSIR, then president of CIRSE. It was important to include input from as large a representation of interventionalists as possible to make sure the statement was universally useful, said Kaufman, professor at the Dotter Interventional Institute, Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, Ore. “Every country will find that what they do is a little different, but the goal is a document backed by interventional radiology societies all over the world stating, ‘This is what constitutes the specialty of interventional radiology,’” he noted. “We expect that the document will be translated and published widely throughout the world,” said Kaufman.

Intentionally brief, the “Global Statement Defining Interventional Radiology” details that IRs have expertise in diagnostic imaging and radiation safety, in image-guided minimally invasive procedures and

techniques as applied to multiple diseases and organs, in the evaluation and management of patients suitable for the image-guided interventions included in the scope of IR practice, and in continual invention and innovation of new techniques, devices and procedures. The unified statement defines and identifies the common features of IR. It provides background and outlines common elements found in the specialty, including clinical practice and scope, training, certification, research, practice quality and professionalism.

Besides SIR, the final statement is endorsed by CIRSE, Austrian Society of Interventional Radiology, Brazilian Society of Interventional Radiology and Endovascular Surgery, British Society of Interventional Radiology, Bulgarian Society of Interventional Radiology, Canadian Interventional Radiology Association, CardioVascular and Interventional Radiology Section Within the Singapore Radiological Society, Cardiovascular and Interventional Society of Turkey, Chinese Society of Interventional Radiology, Croatian Society of Radiology, Czech Society of Interventional Radiology, Danish Society of Interventional Radiology, Dutch Society of Interventional Radiology, Egyptian Society of Interventional Radiology, Finnish Society of Interventional Radiology, Georgian Association of Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiology, German Society of Interventional Radiology and Minimally Invasive Therapy, Hellenic Society of Interventional Radiology, Hong Kong Society of Interventional Radiology, Hungarian Society of Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiology, IberoAmerican Society of Interventionism, Indian Society of Vascular and Interventional Radiology, Interventional Radiology Section, Polish Medical Society of Radiology, Interventional Radiology Society of Australasia, Irish Society of Interventional Radiology, Israeli Society of Interventional Radiology, Japanese Society of Interventional Radiology, Korean Society of Interventional Radiology, Pan Arab Interventional Radiology Society, Philippine Society of Vascular and Interventional Radiology, Portuguese Section of Interventional Radiology of the Portuguese Society of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine, Section of Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiology of the Royal Belgian Radiological Society, Seldinger Society of Vascular and Interventional Radiology, Sezione di Studio della SIRM di Radiologia Vascolare ed Interventistica, Sociedad Argentina de Radiologia, Society of Interventional Onco-Radiology, Spanish Society of Vascular and Interventional Radiology, Swiss Society of Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiology, Taiwanese Radiological Society, Thai Society of Vascular and Interventional Radiology and the Working Group of Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiology of the Slovak Radiological Society.

Interventional radiologists are responsible for much of the medical innovation and development of minimally invasive treatments that are commonplace today. From the invention of angioplasty and the catheter-delivered stent, which were both first used to treat peripheral arterial disease in the legs, to cardiac catheterization, drug-coated stents, balloon angioplasty, catheter delivery systems and clot-removing devices of today—these vascular specialists continue to shape and change the medical landscape and improve patient care. IR treatments offer less risk, less pain and less recovery time than traditional surgery. For more information about the Society of Interventional Radiology and minimally invasive treatments, visit online at www.SIRweb.org.

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About the Society of Interventional Radiology

Interventional radiologists are physicians who specialize in minimally invasive, targeted treatments. They offer the most in-depth knowledge of the least invasive treatments available coupled with diagnostic and clinical experience across all specialties. They use X-ray, MRI and other imaging to advance a catheter in the body, such as in an artery, to treat at the source of the disease internally. As the inventors of angioplasty and the catheter-delivered stent, which were first used in the legs to treat peripheral arterial disease, interventional radiologists pioneered minimally invasive modern medicine. Today, interventional oncology is a growing specialty area of interventional radiology. Interventional radiologists can deliver treatments for cancer directly to the tumor without significant side effects or damage to nearby normal tissue.

Many conditions that once required surgery can be treated less invasively by interventional radiologists. Interventional radiology treatments offer less risk, less pain and less recovery time compared to open surgery. Visit www.SIRweb.org.

Local interviews are available by contacting SIR's communications department via e-mail at mverrillo@SIRweb.org or by phone at (703) 460-5572.