

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis and Pulmonary Embolism

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Foreword from the Acting Surgeon General U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

As the acting Surgeon General, my primary role is to provide the American people with the information they need to improve their health and reduce the risk of injury and illness. This first “Call to Action to Prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Pulmonary Embolism (PE),” provides vital information on critical health problems that cause enormous health consequences and numerous deaths in our country. Estimates suggest that at least 350,000, and as many as 600,000, Americans each year contract DVT/PE, and at least 100,000 deaths are thought to be related to these diseases each year. Many of those who survive have complications that have a serious and negative impact on the quality of their lives. Without the joint efforts of all stakeholders, including clinicians and families, the problem will only worsen as the population ages.

This Call to Action came out of a Surgeon General’s Workshop on DVT/PE held in May 2006. The message from that workshop was clear—there is great hope and optimism about prevention, diagnosis and treatment of these diseases. The presentations and discussion that took place during those two days demonstrated that we have made progress in our knowledge of how to prevent, diagnose and treat DVT/PE. It is also clear that we are not applying that knowledge on a systematic basis. The workshop highlighted the tremendous gap in understanding and knowledge that exists about these diseases. In order to address that gap, we must disseminate information more widely about the availability of effective interventions to prevent and treat DVT/PE. We must also continue to invest in basic scientific, clinical and epidemiological research related to DVT/PE. In addition, our investment in translational research is essential in order to ensure that the public and the medical community can put the latest evidence

into practice quickly and easily. To make this vision a reality, the Surgeon General’s Call to Action is intended to serve as a stimulus for the development of a coordinated plan to reverse the current trend and dramatically reduce the morbidity and mortality caused by DVT/PE. The kinds of activities that are part of this plan are outlined in this document. The critical step for all stakeholders is to come together and address this important health problem. We seek to engage all levels of government as well as individuals and private sector institutions and organizations in a coordinated, multifaceted effort to prevent and reduce the incidence of deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism.

I am encouraged by the participation of so many people and organizations in the May 2006 workshop and the development of this Call to Action. I would like to thank them for their willingness to assist us in gathering the best scientific evidence as a catalyst for improvement. Efforts to reduce the incidence of DVT/PE will demand the full attention and committed efforts of all stakeholders. I am confident that working together we can take real steps to reduce the burden of these diseases. The reward for this effort will be to prove the forecasters wrong. Instead of ever-increasing numbers of individuals developing and suffering from DVT/PE, we will see dramatic reductions in the incidence and prevalence of these conditions.

Steven K. Galson, M.D., M.P.H.
RADM, U.S. Public Health Service
Acting Surgeon General