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U.S. Could Save 100,000 Lives a Year with Five Basic Preventive Services

Aspirin a Day, Other Services Cited in Partnership for Prevention Education Campaign

WASHINGTON - As Congress tackles health reform, a new public education campaign notes that more than 100,000 lives could be saved every year by investing in five basic preventive services. That includes 45,000 deaths that would be prevented each year if people who could benefit were advised by their doctors to take a daily dose of aspirin to prevent heart disease and 42,000 lives that could be saved a year if doctors offered tobacco cessation counseling.

A print ad in *Roll Call*, a popular Capitol Hill newspaper, this week asks members of Congress - **[“If You Could Save 100,000 Lives, Would You Do It?”](#)** It spells out how increasing the widespread use of just five services available through a doctor’s office – aspirin counseling, tobacco cessation counseling, adult influenza immunization, colorectal screening, and breast cancer screening - would save an estimated 117,600 additional lives a year. More information is available online at www.prevent.org/healthreform .

“Tens of thousands of Americans die needlessly every year because they don’t do something as simple as taking an aspirin a day or getting a flu shot,” said Robert Gould, Ph.D., president of Partnership for Prevention. “It’s time for Congress to remove the barriers that hinder people from getting such services. In many cases, their lives may depend upon it.”

A number of obstacles – including lack of coverage as well as co-pay and deductible requirements – currently discourage doctors from providing these services and also discourage many patients from obtaining them,” said Gould, a behavioral scientist who was an architect of the highly successful “truth” anti-tobacco marketing campaign. “As a result, these services are under-utilized, needlessly placing people at risk.”

Partnership is urging Congress to provide coverage for high-value preventive services in all federal health plans, to encourage it in all private plans, and to remove deductibles and co-pays. Gould notes that three of the five services mentioned in the ad – aspirin counseling, tobacco cessation counseling and adult flu immunization – actually save money, while the other two services are highly cost-effective.

The five clinical services cited by Partnership have low utilization rates – 40 percent for daily aspirin use, 37 percent for tobacco cessation counseling, 48 percent for colorectal screening and 67 percent for breast cancer screening.

If the utilization rates of each of those services were increased to 90 percent, the US would save 45,000 additional lives through daily aspirin use, 42,000 additional lives through tobacco cessation counseling 12,000 lives through adult influenza immunization, 14,000 additional lives through colorectal screening, and 3,700 lives through breast cancer screening.

The estimates were based on a study by the National Commission on Prevention Priorities, a Partnership for Prevention initiative that analyzes the value of preventive services. In addition to the print ad, Partnership’s education campaign will include a Facebook page where citizens can contact their members of Congress; an online “widget” with an interactive quiz on preventive services (<http://tinyurl.com/100kquiz>); and op-eds in newspapers around the country.

EDITORS NOTE: INTERVIEWS WITH DR. GOULD OR PARTNERSHIP VICE PRESIDENT CORINNE G. HUSTEN M.D., M.P.H., CAN BE ARRANGED BY CONTACTING DAMON THOMPSON AT 202-997-6125 OR AT DTHOMPSON@PREVENTORG.

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