

News from the American College of Surgeons

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**Statement from the American College of Surgeons Regarding
Recent Comments from President Obama**

CHICAGO--The American College of Surgeons is deeply disturbed over the uninformed public comments President Obama continues to make about the high-quality care provided by surgeons in the United States. When the President makes statements that are incorrect or not based in fact, we think he does a disservice to the American people at a time when they want clear, understandable facts about health care reform. We want to set the record straight.

- Yesterday during a town hall meeting, President Obama got his facts completely wrong. He stated that a surgeon gets paid \$50,000 for a leg amputation when, in fact, Medicare pays a surgeon between \$740 and \$1,140 for a leg amputation. This payment also includes the evaluation of the patient on the day of the operation plus patient follow-up care that is provided for 90 days after the operation. Private insurers pay some variation of the Medicare reimbursement for this service.
- Three weeks ago, the President suggested that a surgeon's decision to remove a child's tonsils is based on the desire to make a lot of money. That remark was ill-informed and dangerous, and we were dismayed by this characterization of the work surgeons do. Surgeons make decisions about recommending operations based on what's right for the patient.

We agree with the President that the best thing for patients with diabetes is to manage the disease proactively to avoid the bad consequences that can occur, including blindness, stroke, and amputation. But as is the case for a person who has been treated for cancer and still needs to have a tumor removed, or a person who is in a terrible car crash and needs access to a trauma surgeon, there are times when even a perfectly managed diabetic patient needs a surgeon. The President's remarks are truly alarming and run the risk of damaging the all-important trust between surgeons and their patients.

We assume that the President made these mistakes unintentionally, but we would urge him to have his facts correct before making another inflammatory and incorrect statement about surgeons and surgical care.

About the American College of Surgeons

The American College of Surgeons is a scientific and educational organization of surgeons that was founded in 1913 to raise the standards of surgical practice and to improve the care of the surgical patient. The College is dedicated to the ethical and competent practice of surgery. Its achievements have significantly influenced the course of scientific surgery in America and have established it as an important advocate for all surgical patients. The College has more than 76,000 members and is the largest organization of surgeons in the world.

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