

## **THE VALUE OF ORTHOPAEDIC CARE**

Musculoskeletal disorders result in pain, loss of active lifestyles, and decline in mental health; and bone and joint disorders are the leading cause of disability in the United States, affecting the physical, financial, and emotional well-being of millions of Americans each year. However, efforts to cut health care spending have typically focused on the direct cost of treatment. Yet indirect costs of musculoskeletal disease – including lost employability, income and independence, missed work days, lowered household income and disability payments – are a vital part of the dialogue. Every day, orthopaedic surgeons help people regain lost mobility and return to a more productive, higher quality of life.

For example, according to a 2013 study<sup>i</sup>, the 600,000-plus total knee replacement surgeries performed in the United States in 2009 will generate about \$12 billion in savings to society over the lifetimes of those patients. About 85 percent of those savings are associated with increased employment and earnings; the remaining 15 percent are linked to fewer missed work days and lower disability payments. Rotator cuff surgery delivers similar long-term benefits, with society-wide savings from such procedures amounting to more than \$3.4 billion a year. **Shortsighted spending reductions fail to consider these broad societal and economic benefits. Policymakers must take a more comprehensive look at the value of orthopaedic treatment.**

### **Why Orthopaedic Care Matters:**

Bone and joint health problems are among the most prevalent and debilitating health challenges that Americans face, both in human and economic terms – and the demand for hip replacements is expected to increase 174 percent by 2030, while the demand for knee replacements will increase 674 percent by 2030. Because of the costs involved, these procedures have been a target in efforts to cut health care costs. But direct costs of surgery are more than offset by indirect savings to society, making these surgeries solid investments in America's workforce. **Consideration of the indirect economic impact of orthopaedic surgery, together with the patient's quality of life and the direct medical costs, is needed to fully understand the net value of treatment options available.**

### **Health Care Legislation Should:**

- **Maintain access to high-quality orthopaedic care:** Patients deserve access to high-quality orthopaedic care so that they may return to gainful employment and/or a more productive, higher quality of life. Unencumbered access to orthopaedic care is key to ensuring that our workers, communities, and economy remain healthy and strong.
- **Consider value:** Cost is part of the equation, but the definition of value must not be dictated by the sticker price of the orthopaedic procedure or treatment alone. Patients experience the value of health care based on how they feel and what they are able to do.

### **What Congress Should Do:**

**Congress should implement policies that improve and maintain access to necessary high quality orthopaedic care and avoid cost-cutting measures that impede access to care.**

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.anationinmotion.org/Value/Knee/>