

The American Association of Neurological Surgeons -AANS Health Care Coverage Position Statement

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(Reaffirmed, November 2009)

Background Facts

Neurosurgeons are medical specialists who diagnose and treat disorders of the entire nervous system. Some of the conditions neurosurgeons treat, such as cerebrovascular disease and traumatic injuries, may have better outcomes if diagnosed and treated early. Access to affordable treatment is a key part of the equation.

- Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States, affecting more than 700,000 people every year, and represents \$51.2 billion in both direct and indirect costs.
- An estimated 11,000 new spinal cord injuries occur in the United States every year. The financial impact is estimated at a minimum of \$9.7 billion annually (including direct and indirect costs).
- Each year, nearly two million people in the United States sustain head injuries, with annual direct and indirect costs of more than \$48 billion. Deaths from head injuries account for 34 percent of all traumatic deaths.

Justification

The number of uninsured Americans continues to increase. According to the Census Bureau's latest estimate (August 2004), the number of uninsured Americans increased from 43.6 million (15.2 percent) in 2002 to 45 million (15.6 percent) in 2003. There are a number of contributing factors accounting for this increase. One contributing factor is the decrease in the number of people receiving coverage through employer-based programs.

The economic cost of the uninsured in the United States is estimated between \$65 billion to \$130 billion annually, and is attributed to the poor health and premature deaths of uninsured individuals.

Access to affordable health care for all Americans, prevention, and patient education are integral to resolving the public health crisis in the United States.

Position Statement

The AANS recognizes that millions of Americans have no health insurance. This is a serious problem facing our Nation that requires prompt attention. The AANS therefore supports health insurance coverage for every American.