



**NATIONAL HEART VALVE DISEASE  
AWARENESS DAY**

**Press Toolkit**

# PRESS RELEASE

**'Listen to Your Heart' during National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day, February 22  
At Least Five Million Americans Have Valve Disease, But Many  
Are Undiagnosed and Untreated**

Washington, D.C., February 19, 2018 – [National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day](#) will be celebrated on February 22, 2018, as organizations, advocates, health care professionals, patients, and families join together across the nation to increase recognition about heart valve disease (HVD).

HVD consists of damage to one or more of the heart's four valves, which interrupts blood flow and often causes serious complications—including death. The good news is that heart valve disease can usually be successfully treated with valve repair or replacement in patients of all ages. This makes awareness of the risk factors and signs and symptoms especially important.

This year's theme of "Listen to Your Heart" encourages people to know their risk factors for heart valve disease, listen to their hearts and get them checked regularly, and know where to turn if they notice symptoms.

"At least five million Americans have heart valve disease, and an [estimated 25,000 people](#) in the U.S. die from it each year," says Susan Peschin, MHS, Alliance for Aging Research president and CEO. "Yet awareness about heart valve disease is still very low, with more than three in four Americans knowing little to nothing about HVD. National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day brings much-needed attention to this condition, and we are honored to be joined by more than 40 national organizations that are encouraging people to 'listen to their heart' in order to ultimately improve detection and access to treatment."

Throughout the country, a series of events is planned, including an event with the Inova Heart and Vascular Institute in northern Virginia at 9:30 a.m. EST. The event features Susan Peschin, MHS, Alliance president and CEO, Dr. Christopher O'Conner, M.D., CEO of Inova Heart and Vascular Institute, Eric L. Sarin, M.D., co-director, Inova Structural Heart Program, Congresswoman Barbara Comstock, and Col. Arnald Gabriel (retired), a heart valve patient. A Twitter chat focused on educating about valve disease will be at 1 p.m. EST. The day will also be recognized at the New York Stock Exchange, where advocates and an individual who was successfully treated for heart valve disease, will ring the closing bell at 4 p.m. EST. All of the day's events can be followed [here](#).

Many of the day's events can be followed on Twitter using [#ValveDiseaseDay](#). The campaign's website [ValveDiseaseDay.org](#) has information about the campaign, free graphics and resources, and tips on how to help spread the word. The Alliance's activities around National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day were conducted with unrestricted educational support from Edwards Lifesciences Foundation and Medtronic.

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## ***What Is National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day?***

National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day is an annual day dedicated to raising awareness about heart valve disease—its risk factors, symptoms, detection, and treatment—in order to reduce the burden of the disease. With education and advocacy, there can be a reduction in the number of people who lose their independence and ability to fully participate in their lives; experience heart attacks, arrhythmias, congestive heart failure, and other heart disease; suffer from strokes; and even die from the disease.

## ***When Is National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day?***

National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day is every February 22—during American Heart Month.

## ***What Is Valve Disease?***

At least five million Americans have heart valve disease. HVD involves damage to one or more of the heart's valves and, while some types are not serious, others can lead to major complications—including death.

Most types of HVD involve a damaged valve that disrupts blood flow by not opening or closing properly. Regurgitation is when a valve does not fully close and allows blood to leak backwards. It is also commonly called insufficiency, or a leaky valve. Stenosis is when a valve does not fully open to allow enough blood to flow through. It is also commonly called a sticky, narrowed, or stiff valve. Each of the four valves can have regurgitation or stenosis (sometimes both), although the aortic and mitral valves are most likely to be damaged.

When valve damage reduces blood flow, the heart has to work harder and the body gets less oxygen—leading to a number of symptoms. However, people with HVD do not always have symptoms, even if their disease is severe. For these people, a heart murmur is the most important clue. For those who experience symptoms, they may be dismissed as a “normal” part of aging.

HVD can be there at birth or develop from damage later in life from calcification, other cardiovascular diseases and conditions, infection, or radiation to the chest. Fortunately, HVD can usually be successfully treated with valve repair or replacement in patients of all ages.

## ***Perceptions of Valve Disease***

A 2016 national omnibus survey of 2,018 adults revealed that, while over half of respondents say they have heard of heart valve disease, less than one in four know somewhat or a great deal about HVD. Although awareness increases with age, 30 percent of respondents over the age of 65 say they know nothing about HVD.

The surveying was done in collaboration with Belden Russonello Strategists, who put questions on Telephone CARAVAN, a national omnibus survey of adults randomly selected via landlines and cell phones.

The Alliance also worked with Belden Russonello Strategists to conduct an in-depth analysis to learn more about awareness levels and the experiences of HVD patients as they are diagnosed and seek treatment. A survey group of more than 400 individuals diagnosed with HVD was recruited through the Harris Panel—including members of its third-party panel providers. The panel provides a robust representative sample of the general U.S. population. Additionally, patient focus groups in Chicago and New York provided a qualitative look at the patient experience.

### **Key findings from the survey include:**

- More than three-quarters of the survey respondents knew a limited amount or nothing about HVD prior to their diagnosis.
- Six in 10 respondents were diagnosed with HVD only because they went to see a health care professional for a regular check-up or some other issue.

Complete survey results can be found at [www.agingresearch.org/heartvalvediseasesurveys](http://www.agingresearch.org/heartvalvediseasesurveys).

## ***Quick Facts/Stats***

- At least five million Americans have heart valve disease.
- HVD involves damage to one or more of the heart's valves which disrupts blood flow by not opening or closing properly.
- HVD becomes more common with age—one in eight people ages 75+ are estimated to have moderate to severe heart valve disease.
- While some types of HVD are not serious, others can lead to major complications—including death.
- After the onset of symptoms, patients with severe aortic stenosis, one of the most common types of HVD, have a survival rate as low as 50 percent at two years and 20 percent at five years—without valve repair or replacement.
- Each year, an estimated 25,000 people in the U.S. die from their HVD.
- HVD can usually be successfully treated with valve repair or replacement in patients of all ages.

- People with HVD do not always have symptoms, and those who do may be told or believe that they are a normal part of aging. This makes detection of HVD critical.
- Unfortunately, awareness about HVD is low. A [recent survey](#) found that close to 40 percent of adults have never heard of HVD, and only one in four know somewhat or a great deal about HVD.
- The goal of this annual National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day is to increase recognition of the specific risks and symptoms of HVD, improve detection and treatment, and ultimately save lives.
- Learn more about National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day at [www.ValveDiseaseDay.org](http://www.ValveDiseaseDay.org).

## ***Story Ideas***

- February 22 was chosen for National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day since February is American Heart Month. The entire month offers opportunities for stories about heart health and heart valve disease. The Alliance has resources at [www.ValveDiseaseDay.org](http://www.ValveDiseaseDay.org) that you can use to develop your story, including the results of our recent awareness survey, a heart valve disease infographic, graphics and other outreach assets, and a library of patient resources at [LivingwithValveDisease.org](http://LivingwithValveDisease.org).
- Consider doing a story in connection with a local hospital or health center to focus on heart valve disease. Interviews with surgeons and patients can bring expertise and a personal aspect to the story.
- Connect with a nonprofit that focuses on heart disease. Check out our list of partners [here](#) for suggestions.
- Since the best way to diagnose valve disease is through an echocardiogram, consider doing a story with a local hospital to experience what a heart valve patient experiences.

## ***Experts Available for Interview***

We have respected heart valve disease experts available for interview. Please see below for available experts:

- [Eric L. Sarin, M.D.](#)  
Co-director, Inova Structural Heart Program  
Inova Heart and Vascular Institute
- [Thomas E. MacGillivray, M.D.](#)  
Chief, Cardiac Surgery and Thoracic Transplant  
Houston Methodist Cardiovascular Surgery Associates
- [Kirk N. Garratt, M.D., MSc, FSCAI](#)  
President of the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions (SCAI)

# RESOURCES

We have provided a number of resources to help you tell your story, including a VNR, graphics, and story ideas.

## *Video News Release*

This VNR offers a video overview of National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day that can be used as part of a broadcast or online story. It features Alliance for Aging Research President and CEO Susan Peschin, MHS. You can download it [here](#).

## *NHVDAD Graphic*

The National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day logo is the official logo of the Awareness Day Campaign and can be used for any stories you do. The *Listen to Your Heart* logo is the 2018 campaign logo. Download both [here](#).



Please note that:

- The logos should not be altered in any way.
- They should not be associated with any brand logos or used for commercial purposes, but you may use with your hospital or organizational logo Awareness Campaign purposes.
- The logos should only be used for education and advocacy that follows the spirit of the campaign as outlined in this document.
- The name National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day and the supporting logos are registered trademarks of the Alliance for Aging Research, and can only be used as outlined in this document.
- The materials produced for this campaign are also subject to copyright laws and terms of use.

## INFOGRAPHIC

This infographic lays out the burden of valve disease, the awareness rates from recent public opinion polls, and information on the Awareness Day Campaign. You can download it [here](#).

