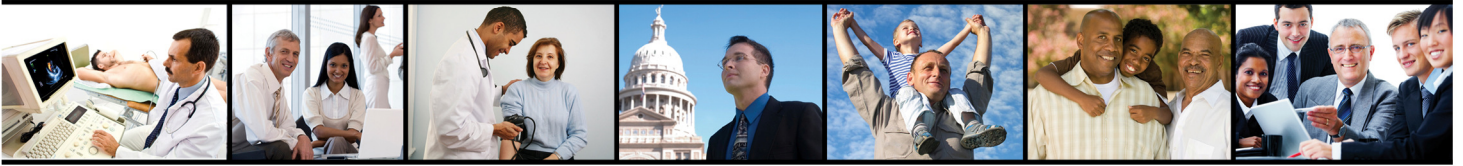


# POLICY ■ STATEMENT



National Forum for Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention

[www.hearthealthystrokefree.org](http://www.hearthealthystrokefree.org)

**September 16, 2009**

## **National Forum Encourages Continuation of the Lipid Standardization Program and its Expansion to Include Emerging Biomarkers for Heart Disease and Stroke**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Heart disease and stroke are leading causes of death, disability, illness and rising health care costs in the United States. The National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention has as one of its key mission elements the goal of reducing the incidence of heart disease and stroke in the U.S. population. Real progress in this area can only be achieved if individuals' risk for heart disease and stroke can be reliably assessed. Key to this success is the accurate and precise measurement of total cholesterol, high-and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol and triglyceride for use in traditional risk assessment. Without reliable test results, false-negative or false-positive test results could have life-threatening implications for patients. Continuation of the Lipid Standardization Program and its expansion to improve other emerging biomarkers for heart disease and stroke must be the focus of policymakers to ensure reliable laboratory results for disease assessment and patient risk classification.

### **PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM**

Every day, health care providers rely on the results of biochemical laboratory tests to make diagnoses and treat individuals with cardiovascular disease and other chronic conditions. On a national or state-wide level, public health officials also can use population-based test results to establish health-risk profiles and to conduct medical and epidemiologic research related to the incidence of heart disease and stroke. Further, such test results can be used to give health officials the information they need to make sound program and policy decisions that will reduce the impact of heart disease and stroke on the public's health.

If the reliability of commonly used tests is in question or if laboratory standards are not being met, the basis for many clinical research and program-evaluation activities can be seriously undermined. For example, using cardiovascular biomarker tests that are not standardized and traceable to the accepted standard could result in the following situations:

- Variability, and thus unreliability, of test results for clinical trials in which multiple laboratories participate.
- Initiation of public health epidemiologic investigations launched on the basis of faulty measurements.
- The use of misleading data for public health evaluation and planning.
- Development of unwarranted and costly public health programs and policies.
- Misclassification of individuals' risk status

- Assist in translating laboratory-based research findings into public health strategies.

The provision of accurate and reliable test results for heart disease and biomarkers will also strengthen the underlying objectives for Healthy People 2020. Therefore, the National Forum strongly recommends continued operation of the Lipid Standardization Program

### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL FORUM**

The National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention (National Forum) is made up of more than 80 organizations committed to building a heart-healthy and stroke-free society. The National Forum provides leadership in implementing the recommendations contained in *A Public Health Action Plan to Prevent Heart Disease and Stroke*.

A Lipid Standardization Program has been operational for the past 50 years. In October 2008, support for the Lipid Standardization Program was terminated. This loss will affect the availability of reference standards and their timely delivery to laboratories. In addition, some tools needed to standardize laboratory tests properly either will not be readily available or not available at all, thus compromising the accuracy and overall reliability of the tests. Continuation of the Lipid Standardization Program is critical to the success of the Nation Forum's efforts to develop a comprehensive national program to reduce the burden of heart disease and stroke. With appropriate support, the program will continue to standardize laboratory tests for total cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol and triglyceride and be in a position to expand its efforts to:

- Evaluate existing standardization data on new biomarkers for use in risk assessment.
- Develop reference standards for these new biomarkers.
- Improve communication with current and potential program users.

