Advocacy Agenda
Goal: The recognition of the Heart Failure Society of America (HFSA) as the primary advocate for heart failure patients, clinicians, and researchers.

HFSA will achieve this goal by advocating for:
- Access to quality care
- Patient education and preventive strategies
- Basic and applied research directed toward prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of heart failure

Objective 1: Minimize disparity in delivery of heart failure care and enhance availability of cost-effective modalities for care of heart failure patients. (H)

As universal coverage and cost containment become our nation’s healthcare goals, there are likely to emerge dual systems of care for the “haves” and “have nots”. For example, as Medicaid is increasingly called upon to play a key role in our universal health care system, states will increasingly feel budgetary pressure to either ratchet down reimbursements below cost or cease to cover select “expensive” treatments, ignoring issues of cost-effectiveness. There is ample evidence that reduction in Medicaid reimbursement rates below providers’ costs are already driving disparities between the rates of evidence-based therapies received by individuals with various forms of third-party coverage. A flagrant example is the decision by Arizona (since rescinded) to eliminate coverage for all forms of transplantation for Medicaid recipients.

HFSA believes that coverage decisions should be driven by careful analysis of outcomes and cost-effectiveness and that reimbursement decisions should be driven by the actual cost associated with providing care. Access to the benefits derived from major advances in diagnostic and treatment options for patients with heart failure should not be driven by the patient’s ability to pay.

Objective 2: Eliminate barriers for appropriately trained professionals to treat patients with heart failure. (H)

As demand for health care services expands and the need to control healthcare expenditures increases, there is growing recognition of the valuable roles to be played by advanced care providers, including Nurse Practitioners and Physicians Assistants. These individuals have advanced training and degrees, allowing them to provide an increasingly complex set of services for patients with conditions such as heart failure. For instance, the American Association of Heart Failure Nurses now offers certification in Heart Failure Nursing.
The HFSA supports advancing the training and certification of nurses and advanced care providers to aid evolution of our healthcare system in a manner that provides care to the expanding heart failure patient population, while maintaining cost-effectiveness. Efforts should be undertaken to facilitate access by patients with heart failure to the services of appropriately trained and certified advanced care providers by eliminating unnecessary and variable state barriers that restrict individuals from practicing at the level consistent with their training and competency.

**Objective 3: Advance the education and training of clinicians to care for patients with heart failure (H)**

There is an increasing need for clinicians to care for the expanding population of patients with heart failure and to foster strategies to prevent this condition. At the same time, academic medicine stands to become a prime victim of impending governmental funding cuts, an effect which will devastate the advancement of healthcare practice for decades to come. The continued funding of medical education and training is an absolute necessity if we are to continue to advance appropriate prevention and treatment strategies in the field of heart failure. Funding must be maintained for our nation’s academic medical centers and their education and research missions, pivotal for improving care for the expanding US heart failure patient population.

HFSA will work to encourage individuals to focus their healthcare careers toward heart failure prevention and management. We seek to facilitate heart failure-focused education and training of individuals across all healthcare disciplines and through all stages of development. We seek to assure that sufficient funding is directed toward heart failure pre-graduate and post-graduate educational programs, including the newly-accredited programs in Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology.

**Objective 4: Advance recognition for individuals with specialized training/certification in heart failure. (H)**

As the population of patients with heart failure expands, so does the complexity and specialization of care available. Competency of care must be enhanced for patients at all stages, including:

- recognizing early risk and implementing preventive strategies;
- utilizing appropriate state-of-the-art medical treatments;
- strengthening the continuity of care across various care settings;
- appropriately deploying advanced treatments for select patients;
- offering effective end-of-life care where appropriate

Much of the care required by heart failure patients is delivered by primary care providers or general cardiologists. However, at each of the above stages, consultation from an Advanced Heart Failure specialist may be warranted, and the expertise of a specialist is essential during consideration of advanced therapies, such as cardiac transplant and ventricular assist device implantation.

Recently, the American Board of Internal Medicine and American Board of Medical Specialties have recognized Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology as an official secondary subspecialty of Cardiology, analogous to the secondary subspecialty of Clinical Cardiac Electrophysiology. This step was supported by both Internal Medicine and Cardiology professional societies. The first group of sub-specialists was certified during this past year. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education is in the final stages of initiating accreditation of training programs in this subspecialty.

The HFSA was instrumental in achieving the accreditation and supports the value and recognition of this subspecialty. To that end, HFSA is now advocating for a designation code from CMS that will recognize the significant difference in care provided by board certified heart failure specialists. Evaluation and management services performed by Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology subspecialists should be reimbursable, even if the patient is receiving services from a general cardiologist. Otherwise, a barrier exists against delivery of these services, potentially depriving patients of the expertise that will allow appropriate and advanced methods of care.

**Objective 5: Advance research and development in prevention and treatment of heart failure. (H)**

HFSA seeks to advance research and development to facilitate a highly innovative pipeline of discovery and implementation of novel approaches to prevent and treat heart failure.

As research budgets tighten, the very apparatus that has driven major gains in reducing heart failure-associated morbidity and mortality is threatened. HFSA believes that it is essential to support the continuation of basic, translational, and clinical research in the area of heart failure in order to 1) prevent this condition; 2) identify cost-effective treatments to prevent morbidity and mortality among heart failure patients; and 3) promote effective management strategies through innovative systems for efficient delivery of care. HFSA will support these efforts through advocating that sufficient resources be directed toward research. We will direct our efforts by both 1) encouraging governmental and non-governmental funding agencies and
organizations to fund appropriate research and 2) advancing our own research funding mechanisms.

Beyond increasing the level of research funding, HFSA seeks to provide guidance to, and represent a resource for, research funding agencies and organizations in order to direct resources toward those areas of basic, translational, and clinical research most likely to achieve the greatest “bang for the buck” in preventing heart failure and achieving cost-effective improvement in health care outcomes for the population. At the same time, HFSA seeks to preserve basic research as critical, because a better understanding of the molecular and physiologic basis of heart failure is ultimately the most valuable tool in preventing and treating heart failure.

HFSA also seeks to facilitate the development and implementation of drugs, biologics, technologies, and strategies for preventing and treating heart failure, where these items have a sufficiently strong scientific justification. Toward that end, we will advocate for streamlining regulatory processes, in order to better enable the pipeline of translation from discovery to development to implementation.