

RITA Medical Systems Announces CPT Codes Issued By AMA For Radiofrequency Ablation of Liver Tumors

New Reimbursement Codes in 2002 CPT Edition Create More Uniform And Streamlined Reimbursement for Physicians

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif., Dec. 6 /PRNewswire/ -- RITA Medical Systems, Inc. (Nasdaq: RITA), a medical device company that develops, manufactures and markets minimally invasive products to treat patients with solid cancerous or benign tumors, announced today that the American Medical Association (AMA) has issued Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes for the radiofrequency (RF) ablation of liver tumors in the new 2002 edition of the AMA's CPT official coding reference. CPT codes represent the universal system used by physicians to identify specific procedures when billing Medicare for their services. Other private insurers typically base their reimbursement on these codes as well. The issuance of these CPT codes creates a uniform and streamlined method for reimbursing physicians who are now paid on a case-by-case basis.

The new CPT codes, 47382, 47370 and 47380, are for percutaneous, laparoscopic and open RF liver tumor ablation procedures, respectively, and will become effective January 1, 2002. RITA Medical Systems' proprietary RF ablation system is principally used today for these procedures. The company's technology enables physicians to deliver monitored and controlled levels of RF energy through an array of thin electrodes inserted into a tumor, heating and destroying that tumor, often without open surgery or the need for a general anesthetic.

President and Chief Executive Officer Barry Cheskin welcomed the AMA's publishing of CPT codes for RF ablation, which he called an important milestone for the procedure and for the company.

"The issuance of CPT codes by the AMA represents another significant validation of RF ablation as an established clinical practice for destroying unresectable cancerous liver tumors," Cheskin said. "The newly issued CPT codes will greatly simplify billing procedures, lessen paperwork for the growing number of physicians performing the procedures and should increase their likelihood of getting reimbursed."

About RITA Medical Systems:

RITA Medical Systems develops, manufactures and markets innovative products for patients with solid cancerous or benign tumors. The proprietary RITA system uses radiofrequency energy to heat tissue to a high enough temperature to ablate it or cause cell death. While the company's current focus is on liver cancer, the company believes that its minimally invasive technology may in the future be applied to other types of tumors, including tumors of the lung, bone, breast, prostate and kidney. The company has received regulatory clearance in major markets worldwide, including the United States. In March 2000, RITA became the first radiofrequency ablation company to receive specific FDA clearance for unresectable liver lesions in addition to its previous general FDA clearance for the ablation of soft tissue. The company has sold over 30,000 of its disposable devices throughout the world.

The statements in this news release related to the company's plans to extend its technology to applications beyond the liver as well as statements related to the effect of the issuance of CPT codes on physician reimbursement are forward-looking statements involving risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from those in such forward-looking statements. Potential risks and uncertainties include the company's dependence on timely market acceptance of the RITA system, the outcome of current patent actions, the company's history of operating losses and expectation that it will continue to incur significant operating expenses over the next several years, significant competition in the company's industry and alternative therapies which could prove to be superior to the RITA system. Further information regarding these and other risks is included in the company's periodic filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, including the company's Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2000 and the company's Report on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended March 31, 2001, June 30, 2001 and September 30, 2001.

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