

Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) Update

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DECISION PENDING ON 21 PERCENT MEDICARE PAY CUT

On February 26th, the House passed HR 4691, legislation that extends a number of expiring programs for 30 days, including current Medicare physician payment rates, which would once again postpone the 21% cut that was scheduled to take effect this year. The Senate attempted unsuccessfully on several occasions to pass the same bill by unanimous consent over objections on the basis that \$10 billion cost of the program extensions was not offset.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has said that they are notifying their contractors to hold Medicare physician claims for 10 business days, effective Monday, March 1st.

CMS believes Congress is working to avoid the negative update that will take effect March 1. Consequently, CMS has instructed its contactors to hold claims containing services paid under the MPFS for the first 10 business days of March. The holding of MPFS claims will only affect claims with dates of service March 1, 2010, and forward. This hold should have a minimum impact on provider cash flow because, under current law, clean electronic claims are not paid any sooner than 14 calendar days (29 for paper claims) after the date of receipt. Be on the alert for more information about the 2010 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Update.

You may wish to express opinions to your Senators about Congress' mismanagement of the Medicare and TRICARE programs, which are so important to the health and well-being of Americans who have served our nation so long and so well. Key points to include in your communication are:

- * Congress had more than a year to repeal the Medicare payment formula and ensure the security and stability of the program. Instead, it has abandoned patients who rely on Medicare and TRICARE for their health care.
- * Parliamentary procedures offer no excuse for the harm they are causing these programs.
- * Stop playing games with patients and the physicians; repeal the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula once and for all.

You may use the AMA's Grassroots Hotline: 1-800-833-6354.

Or you may contact your State Senators directly.

AMA SEEKS YOUR HELP IN HIGHLIGHTING MEDICARE PROBLEMS The AMA is looking for physicians who can share their personal stories about how the Medicare cuts will impact their practice and how their offices will handle the cuts. Additionally if you have already made changes because of the uncertainty in the system, this information would be helpful. The AMA will share the stories with Members of Congress and the press to highlight the impact on real physicians and the seniors and military families they care for.

The information needed is:

NAME, SPECIALTY, CITY, STATE, EMAIL, PHONE NUMBER, YOUR STORY

Please forward to: Katherine M. Hatwell, AMA Media Relations, 202-789-7419 or katherine.hatwell@ama-assn.org<<mailto:katherine.hatwell@ama-assn.org>>.

Sources: Medical Society of Delaware and Highmark Medicare Services