



February 26, 2010

Dear Colleague:

Congress has failed to stop the 21% cuts to Medicare payments to physicians due to take effect on Monday, March 1. **Physicians will now face a 21% cut in Medicare payments beginning March 1.** For more details on the reasons behind this failure, please see below for more information.

CMA is sending a delegation to Washington, DC, next week to express our outrage at these cuts. We need your help to support these efforts.

Here's what you can do right now to help us stop the cuts as quickly as possible and to let Congress know that their mismanagement of this issue is unacceptable.

**ACT NOW TO HELP STOP MEDICARE CUTS**

- 1) Call your Senator and Members of Congress TODAY to let them know the impact these cuts will have on your practice. Tell your Representative:
  - The Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate formula (SGR) *must be repealed once and for all* or Congress will permanently compromise seniors' access to care;
  - 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.

Use the AMA Grassroots Hotline to contact your Senators and Representatives: 800-833-6354.

If the AMA hotline is busy, you can find contact information for California Senators [Boxer](#) and [Feinstein](#) at <http://www.senate.gov>. Contact information for your Representatives is available at <https://writerep.house.gov>.

- 2) Send CMA your personal stories about how the Medicare cuts will impact your practice and how your offices will handle the cuts. If you have already made changes because of the uncertainty in the system, this information would be helpful. We'll share the stories with Members of Congress and the press to highlight the impact of these cuts on real physicians and the seniors and military families they care for.

E-mail your stories to CMA at: [memberservice@cmanet.org](mailto:memberservice@cmanet.org)

If you have any questions, you can call the CMA member help line: **800-786-4CMA (4262)**.

- 3) Get your patients involved. CMA has created a flier for you to hand to your patients to enlist them in our efforts to protect Medicare. You can download the flier here: [http://www.cmanet.org/healthreform/patient\\_flyer\\_medicare.pdf](http://www.cmanet.org/healthreform/patient_flyer_medicare.pdf).

### **CONGRESS FAILS TO STOP 21% CUTS**

Yesterday, 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 last night and this morning to pass the same bill by unanimous consent, but objections were raised by Senator Jim Bunning (R-KY), on the basis that \$10 billion cost of the program extensions was not offset. The Senate has now adjourned for the weekend, so the 21% Medicare physician payment cut will be effective on Monday, March 1.

California's congressional Democrats and Senators have voted to repeal the SGR. However, the issue remains unresolved.

### **CMS NOTIFYING CONTRACTORS TO HOLD CLAIMS FOR 10 DAYS**

We have been informed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that they are notifying their contractors to hold Medicare physician claims for 10 business days, effective Monday. The agency will also be sending out a similar message on its various listservs this afternoon to physicians, and contractors will be instructed to disseminate this information as well.

Stay tuned for more information from CMA on this issue. We will continue to fight to stop these harmful cuts in the days that come.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Brennan Cassidy, M.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

J. Brennan Cassidy, M.D.  
CMA President