

November 18, 2010

AMA/FEDERATION NEWS: National headlines, grassroots news and important AMA announcements for Federation executives and communicators.

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TOP STORIES

- 1. AMA urges Congress to stop Medicare cut this month; White Coat Wednesday extended to today**

With Congress reconvening this week for its lame-duck legislative session, the AMA is urging lawmakers to stop steep cuts to Medicare physician payments set to begin December 1. Without congressional action before December 1, physicians will face a 23 percent Medicare payment cut—followed by another 2 percent cut on January 1—which will hurt seniors' access to care.

“Congressional action this month is the only way to stop the Medicare cut,” AMA President Cecil B. Wilson, MD, said. “Congress needs to keep Medicare strong for our senior patients and ensure that baby boomers will have access to physicians when they begin receiving their Medicare cards for the first time this January.”

U.S. senators' phone lines were jammed yesterday during White Coat Wednesday with physicians demanding that Congress stop the looming cuts. As a result, the event has been extended through today. If physicians did not get through, they can call the AMA's grassroots hotline today at (800) 833-6354 and remind their senators that their actions have real-world consequences for seniors who rely on Medicare. And tell physicians to join the AMA

Physicians' Grassroots Network at <http://www.ama-assn.org/go/grassroots> to receive timely updates about legislation.

Physicians are not the only ones concerned, though. According to a new poll released November 8 by the AMA, a staggering 94 percent of Americans are concerned about a looming cut in Medicare physician payments. Visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/news/news/stop-medicare-cut.shtml> to learn more about the poll.

An AMA ad, which appeared in Washington, D.C., publications this week, urges concerned Americans to contact Congress and tell them to stop the cuts this month. The ad features seniors, a veteran and an active duty military member—all groups that would be hurt by the cuts. Visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/399/medicare-par/medicare-ad.pdf> to view the ad.

The AMA also offers various materials as part of its Physician Payment Action Kit, which can be found at <http://www.ama-assn.org/go/medicarepaymentkit>. Among those materials is a new flier that physicians can distribute or display in their waiting rooms to educate Medicare and TRICARE patients about the problem. Visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/399/medicare-par/medicare-patient-flyer.pdf> to download the flier.

2. Back by popular demand—upcoming webinar explores reassessing Medicare options

With Medicare physician payments scheduled to be cut a combined 25 percent, this year's Medicare participation decision period arrives at a time of tremendous uncertainty for physicians and patients.

Last week, physicians received information from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services about the Medicare participation decision period, during which physicians have the opportunity to declare their Medicare participation or nonparticipation status for 2011. Through December 31, physicians have their annual opportunity to review and perhaps change their participation status with the Medicare program.

Physicians can learn about the options they have—participation in Medicare, nonparticipation in Medicare or opting out of Medicare and privately contracting with patients—during “[Understanding your Medicare choices: Preparing for the 2011 Medicare participation decision](#),” an AMA webinar scheduled to take place at 7:30 p.m. Eastern time December 2. AMA President Cecil B. Wilson, MD, and the AMA's advocacy staff will describe the advantages and disadvantages of the three options and walk participants through examples of how payments are calculated under each one.

Participants also will be introduced to a series of resources that help physicians gauge which Medicare option is right for their practice. Resources include a worksheet that calculates the revenue impact of changing from “participating” to “nonparticipating” status and sample communications that physicians can use when explaining their Medicare participation to patients.

The webinar also will cover government-proposed 2011 Medicare physician payment policy changes.

The AMA also developed a kit to help physicians choose the direction that is right for their practices. The kit includes the guide, “Know your options: Medicare participation guide,” which contains a detailed explanation of the three available options. Visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/go/medicarekit> to download the kit.

3. Dial in for December 1 Office Hours with Dr. Wilson

Join AMA President Cecil B. Wilson, MD, for the next Office Hours with Dr. Wilson at 7 p.m. Eastern time December 1. Office Hours is a conference call in which AMA members can share their thoughts, concerns and suggestions with Dr. Wilson. Along with listening to your comments and answering your questions, Dr. Wilson will discuss the AMA’s strategic plan and provide the latest news on the 23 percent Medicare physician payment cut scheduled to take effect that day.

AMA members can visit <https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/schedule/display.do?udc=ljhbuam0mtw1> to register for the December 1 call.

FEDERATION NEWS

4. AMA establishes new policy for ACOs; seminars set for Nebraska, Iowa, Oregon

During the Interim Meeting of the AMA House of Delegates last week, the AMA set new policy for the development and operation of accountable care organizations (ACOs), an emerging model of patient care designed to provide high-quality patient care in an efficient manner.

The AMA’s new policy contains principles emphasizing that ACOs must be physician-led, place patients’ interests first, ensure voluntary physician and patient participation, and enable independent physicians to participate. Visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/news/news/accountable-care-organizations.shtml> to learn more about the new policy.

Learn more about ACOs and other new payment and delivery models by attending “Pathways to success: What physicians need to know about ACOs and the coming revolution in payment practices,” an AMA seminar being held in various cities around the country. Participants at these seminars will hear from national and local experts who have had varied—and successful—experiences with the new payment models.

Upcoming seminars are scheduled from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Central time December 7 at the Omaha Marriott in Omaha, Neb., to be presented in conjunction with the Nebraska Medical Association, and from 6 to 9 p.m. Central time December 8 at the Marriott West Des Moines Hotel in West Des Moines, Iowa, to be presented in conjunction with the Iowa Medical Society. Register today;

visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/2010-strategic-issues/payment-model-resources.shtml> and click on “Payment Models Seminars.”

The AMA also is planning to hold a seminar February 16 in Portland, Ore., to be presented in conjunction with the Oregon Medical Association. Watch future issues of *AMA/Federation News* for details.

The seminars are open to physicians and their office employees, as well as nonphysician staff members of organizations represented in the AMA House of Delegates. There will be significant time during both seminars for interactive discussions, questions and networking. Space is limited, so register today. Continuing medical education credit is available for physicians participating in the seminar series.

The American Medical Association is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

The American Medical Association designates this live activity for a maximum of 4.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™.

5. Ohio physicians get help with social media through new toolkit

The Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA) has developed a social media toolkit to help physicians navigate through the world of online communication. The toolkit, entitled “Social networking and medical practice: guidelines for physicians, office staff and patients,” gives examples of how best to handle certain situations that a physician might encounter when using social media, including whether or not to “friend” a patient.

“The expansion of social networking websites, like Facebook and Twitter, has forever changed the way everyone communicates in our personal and professional lives,” OSMA President Richard R. Ellison, MD, said. “However, as a physician, social media use can also pose many potential concerns. This toolkit provides resources to help physicians utilize social media while remaining within the legal and ethical bounds of our profession.”

Visit <http://www.osma.org/socialmediapolicy> to view the toolkit.

Visit <http://www.osma.org/news/release.dT/osma-releases-social-media-toolkit-for-physicians-office-staff-and-patients/1412> to view an OSMA news release about the toolkit.

In addition, the AMA set new policy regarding physicians’ use of social media during the Interim Meeting of the AMA House of Delegates this month. Visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/news/news/social-media-policy.shtml> to read about the policy.

PUBLIC HEALTH

6. *Virtual Mentor* looks at neuroethics in the 21st century

What should a physician do when a patient requests a neuroenhancement pharmaceutical—a “smart pill”—for a nonmedical reason?

This is one case explored in this month’s issue of *Virtual Mentor*, the AMA’s online ethics journal. The November issue also delves deeper into the many clinical and ethical questions associated with neuroenhancement, neurodiversity and the nature of creativity, including cases where parents decline treatment for a child with autism and standardizing criteria for declaring brain death.

Visit <http://www.virtualmentor.org> to view this month’s issue.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

7. A new resource: *American Medical News* archives

The AMA is now offering unrestricted online access to *American Medical News*, its award-winning newspaper. The online news archive dates back to January 2000, with selected earlier content, and represents a rich resource on issues confronting physicians and trends in medicine.

Content includes in-depth reporting on the business and regulatory sides of health care, practice management and hot issues in public health and patient care. Among the archival articles with relevance today are a three-part series on the evolution of Medicare’s physician-payment morass, the story of one of the rare physicians to emerge victorious from a frivolous medical liability lawsuit, and the inspiring “Never too old to quit” with practical advice on how to help the elderly stop smoking.

Also, visit “From the vault,” a showcase of editors’ picks featuring a special vault-treasures search tool. The site welcomes links to its content.

Visit <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/news/news/amednews-opens-archive.shtml> to learn more about the new *American Medical News* archives online.

8. View highlights from the AMA Interim Meeting

Find out what happened during this year's Interim Meeting of the AMA House of Delegates by visiting the Interim Meeting website at <http://www.ama-assn.org/go/interim2010>. It contains daily highlights from the meeting and video recaps by the Doctor's Channel. Also view *American Medical News'* daily news coverage of the meeting at <http://www.amednews.com/house>.

9. Tell physicians to join the AMA's Health IT Online Community

Physicians and their practice staffs can engage with their colleagues about current topics related to health IT by joining the AMA's Health IT Online Community, a new forum for physicians, practice managers and practice staff.

The recently launched community is a safe and secure environment where physicians can discuss and comment on pertinent topics related to health IT and find timely updates from the AMA and others on health IT news and issues. The community offers a discussion board, a blog written by various health IT "experts," information on upcoming events, and links to resources and news.

Physicians can join the Health IT Group today by visiting <http://www.ama-assn.org/go/healthitgroup> and contribute to this and other discussions.

It's important to note that only physicians and their practice staff can become a member of the online Health IT Group, so they can feel secure in knowing they are interacting only with other colleagues. Login to the site is required, so others cannot read or access the Health IT online community.

If physicians already have an AMA website account, they will be prompted to sign in and taken directly to the Health IT Group. If they don't have an AMA login, they will be prompted to create one, and then taken to the group.

If physicians encounter any problems logging in, have them call the AMA Unified Service Center at (800) 621-8335. Or e-mail the community manager at ama.community@ama-assn.org.

If physicians are not an AMA member and would like to be, they can join today at <http://www.ama-assn.org/go/join>.

External links to Web sites and e-mail addresses are offered to provide readers with additional sources of news and information. The AMA is not responsible for the content contained in these external sources.

If you have any questions regarding this newsletter please send an e-mail to AMA.Federation.News@ama-assn.org or call (312) 464-4657.

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