

July 7, 2011

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

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TOP STORIES

1. AMA supports IPAB repeal bills; cites 'double jeopardy' with SGR target

In letters sent Wednesday to both chambers of Congress, the AMA voiced its support for legislation that would repeal the Medicare Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB).

Legislation that would repeal the IPAB was introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate earlier this year. Authorized by the Affordable Care Act, the IPAB is a 15-member board aimed at cutting costs when the Medicare program's per capita growth rate exceeds a specified target.

The AMA has continually expressed its opposition to the IPAB throughout and since the health system reform debate because of the potential adverse effects it could have on patients and physicians. In dual letters to the House and Senate, the AMA stated that the IPAB puts important health care payment and policy decisions in the hands of an independent body that has far too little accountability.

"Major changes in the Medicare program should be decided by elected officials," AMA Immediate Past President Cecil B. Wilson, MD, wrote. "We have already seen

first-hand the ill effects of the flawed sustainable growth rate (SGR) physician target and the steep cuts that Congress has had to scramble each year to avoid, along with the significant price tag of a long-term SGR solution. The IPAB would subject physicians to double jeopardy in the form of two separate targets.”

Visit

<http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,lv0p,9cjt,9t9z,a6f9> to view the letter to the House.

Visit

<http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,5ej8,gklu,9t9z,a6f9> to view the letter to the Senate.

Visit

<http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,aeun,jkhc,9t9z,a6f9> to read more about this in AMA Wire.

2. Physicians: Medicare payment reform must be part of deficit reduction plans

The AMA and 112 state and medical specialty societies sent a letter June 27 to the president, vice president and congressional leaders urging that reform of the broken Medicare physician payment formula—the sustainable growth rate (SGR)—be part of any deficit reduction plan.

In the letter, the physician organizations told policymakers that the cost of physician payment reform has grown over the years as Congress enacted frequent short-term fixes. As recently as 2005, the cost of permanent reform would have been \$48 billion, but today it is estimated to be nearly \$300 billion over the next decade. If action is not taken now, the cost will continue to escalate to \$500 billion in only a few short years.

Meanwhile, the SGR is set to cut Medicare physician payments by nearly 30 percent on Jan. 1, threatening access to care for Medicare patients. The AMA has called for a three-pronged approach to reforming the physician payment system, which AMA Immediate Past President Cecil B. Wilson, MD, outlined during testimony before Congress in early May.

“There is wide bipartisan agreement that permanent reform of the broken Medicare physician payment system is critical and that we must address our growing national debt,” Dr. Wilson said. “These problems must have a shared solution. The longer Congress waits to enact permanent physician payment reform, the greater the burden will be on our national debt.”

Visit

<http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,allt,2snz,9t9z,a6f9>
to view the letter.

Visit

<http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,m3zv,3gli,9t9z,a6f9>
to read more in an AMA news release.

FEDERATION NEWS

3. CSMS and Amagine, Inc. announce relationship to deliver health information resources to physicians

Amagine, Inc., a subsidiary of the AMA, and the Connecticut State Medical Society announced recently that they are teaming up to offer the AMAGINE physician portal to Connecticut physicians. The agreement paves the way to enable joint outreach strategies to encourage the adoption of health information technology (IT) to Connecticut physicians.

This is Amagine's second agreement with a state medical society and its first since the AMAGINE physician portal became nationally available in April of this year. In 2009, the Michigan State Medical Society (MSMS) and the AMA began a pilot project to provide MSMS members with health IT products and services. The success of the pilot project has now opened the door for all state and specialty medical societies to make the portal available to their members.

Visit

<http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,xsf,jhm1,9t9z,a6f9>
to read more in an AMA news release.

4. California physicians ask for investigation of improper overpayment refund requests

Physicians in the Golden State filed a formal complaint last month with California's Department of Managed Health Care after several physicians said they received overpayment refund requests from the Anthem Blue Cross Special Investigations Unit outside the 365-day period allowed by state law.

The California Medical Association (CMA) filed the complaint June 14. State law allows health plans to pursue recovery of any type of overpayment made to providers within 365 days of the date the claim was paid. For claims older than 365 days, plans can seek to recover overpayments only if the alleged overpayment was "caused in whole or in part by fraud or misrepresentation on the part of the provider," according to the law.

The CMA believes Blue Cross is using an overly broad definition of "misrepresentation" to seek recoupment on claims older than one year.

According

to the CMA, the insurer appears to define "misrepresentation" as any untrue material fact or error, whether deceitfully or innocently made.

Visit

<http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,h7vc,jvi8,9t9z,a6f9>
to read more.

PUBLIC HEALTH

5. Online program features prescribing for tobacco dependence

Physicians can view national prescribing information for treating tobacco dependence as well as evidence-based treatment guidelines in the latest AMA Therapeutic Insights—a free online quarterly newsletter featuring a different disease in each issue. Aimed at enhancing physician knowledge and practice—and, ultimately, improving the quality of patient care—AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ is offered for each newsletter.

Visit

<http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,cplu,15fj,9t9z,a6f9>
to view the latest AMA Therapeutic Insights.

Visit www.ama-assn.org/go/therapeuticinsights to view past editions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

6. North Carolina seminar to highlight physician payment and delivery innovations

Join AMA President-elect Jeremy A. Lazarus, MD, for "AMA Pathways to Success: What physicians need to know about ACOs and the coming revolution in payment practices," a seminar scheduled from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Eastern time July 16 at the Hilton Raleigh-Durham Airport in Durham, N.C.

Hear from national and local physicians who are pioneering innovations in physician payment and care delivery such as bundled payments and accountable care organizations (ACO). Federation staff members, along with physicians and their office staff members, are welcome to attend.

Visit

<http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,lx6n,az4q,9t9z,a6f9>
to learn more about the seminar.

Visit

<http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,6qc4,h176,9t9z,a6f9>
to register.

7. Upcoming webinar to cover new menu of payment and delivery options

Learn about new initiatives and pilot programs being tested in Medicare and the private sector by participating in an AMA webinar at 7 p.m. Eastern time July 28.

The hourlong webinar, led by AMA President-elect Jeremy Lazarus, MD, will cover AMA advocacy efforts with Congress and the White House around the Medicare physician payment issue, explain the AMA's comments on the proposed federal rule for accountable care organizations and describe AMA resources on physician payment.

AMA members and Federation staff can participate for free. Visit <http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,3dbw,llge,9t9z,a6f9> to register today.

8. Dr. Carmel to hold first 'Office Hours' call July 21

Join AMA President Peter W. Carmel, MD, for his first Office Hours with Dr. Carmel conference call at 7 p.m. Eastern time July 21. A pediatric neurosurgeon from Newark, N.J., Dr. Carmel will share new developments on the latest issues affecting the profession and respond to participants' opinions, comments and questions.

Dr. Carmel's "Office Hours" calls will be conducted quarterly and are exclusive to AMA members and Federation staff. Visit <http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,loak,224m,9t9z,a6f9> to register for the call.

Visit <http://www.elabs10.com/ct.html?rtr=on&s=x8pbgr,ku57,2ke5,8nhi,182s,9t9z,a6f9> for more information about Office Hours with Dr. Carmel.