



Talking Points: *Proposed Medicare Physician Payment Cuts*

- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has proposed payment cuts that could cripple cardiology practices and threaten the ability of cardiovascular specialists to treat and diagnose patients with heart-related illnesses.
- Specifically, CMS has proposed several technical changes in how payments are calculated that add up to an overall 11% decrease in Medicare payments for cardiology services. As if the 11 percent were not bad enough, most of the core cardiology services face cuts ranging from 10 to 40 percent as a result of data from an AMA practice expense survey. Add in the regularly scheduled SGR cuts of more than 20 percent and practices could see possible payment cuts ranging from 25 to almost 50 percent, without Congressional action.
- The ACC has significant concerns about the validity of the AMA practice expense survey process and the quality of the data. Not only was the data not evaluated using the rigorous standards used by CMS in previous surveys, but the cardiology practice expense data are based on responses from only 55 survey participants.
- CMS should not implement payment cuts based on data that has not been reviewed and validated. In particular, cuts of this magnitude will no doubt have significant negative impacts on practices, practice staff and patient access.
- The ACC is working with oncology and its partner cardiology specialty societies to mount an all-out effort to protect the ability of practices to provide patients with the care they deserve. ACC leadership and staff advocacy team are taking this message to Capitol Hill, CMS and the Obama Administration. However, it is critical that Congress and the administration hear first-hand from ACC members, their support staff and patients about the impacts of these cuts.
- The Ask: Tell your senators and representative to contact CMS and urge the agency to stop the proposed payment cuts. Let them know about the gains we have made to ensure quality, patient-centered care, while also looking for ways to reduce costs. Tell them that all of these efforts could be derailed if proposed payment cuts for critical cardiovascular services are allowed to go through in 2010. Provide specifics about the impacts of the cuts on your practice.
- Tell Congress to stop these large-scale arbitrary cuts so that we can continue to make great strides in how patients with heart disease and other illnesses are treated and diagnosed.