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Surgical Care Coalition Launches a Week of Action to Protect Patients’ Access to Surgical Care

WASHINGTON, September 16, 2020 – The new Medicare Physician Fee Schedule proposed rule announced by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for calendar year 2021 (CY2021) threatens patients’ access to surgical care by cutting Medicare payments to surgeons.

Starting September 21st, the Surgical Care Coalition will launch a Week of Action calling on Congress to stand up and stop the cuts.

“Congress needs to step in and stop these cuts. They will negatively impact patients and the surgeons who treat them, during a time of unique stress on the health care system,” said John A. Wilson, MD, FAANS, American Association of Neurological Surgeons President. “This Week of Action is an important call on Congress to preserve American’s access to surgical care.”

The Surgical Care Coalition’s Week of Action, starting September 21st, will include several public initiatives to highlight the need for Congress to stop these cuts.

- A webinar with practicing surgeons on the damaging impact of these cuts
- Grassroots Congressional email and social campaigns
- A radio media tour with surgeons from Netflix’s Lenox Hill, Drs. Boockvar and Langer
- A public campaign to raise awareness of the issue nationally

To stop these cuts and preserve care for patients, Congress needs to act. The proposed rule would cut Medicare payments across several surgical specialties, some up to 9%. These cuts would have been damaging when they were planned before COVID-19, but amid the pandemic these cuts are reckless to impose on an already disrupted health care system. These cuts will likely force surgeons to take fewer Medicare patients, leading to longer wait times and limiting access to surgical care.

“Ophthalmology lost more patient volume due to the COVID-19 pandemic than any other medical specialty,” said David Glasser, MD, American Academy of Ophthalmology Secretary for Federal Affairs. “And the many ophthalmologists who operate like small businesses are struggling the most. Working with less pay and a shrinking staff, they face the heartbreaking choice of restricting access to Medicare patients, selling their practices or retiring.”

About the Surgical Care Coalition
The Surgical Care Coalition advocates for access to quality surgical care for all Americans. The Surgical Care Coalition is comprised of 12 surgical professional associations that proudly represent more than 150,000 surgeons working across the country with a common goal of improving the quality of care, and quality of life, for all patients. The founding members have worked together for nearly three decades to promote sound policy solutions to the U.S. Congress and federal regulatory agencies to solve the biggest challenges in health care.