

Medicare Cuts Jeopardize Patient Care and Ignore Impacts of Pandemic

Congress must take immediate action and stop the cuts to protect patient access to care

WASHINGTON, December 1, 2020 – The Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) final rule released today by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will harm patients and further destabilize a health care system already under severe strain from the pandemic. Congress must work swiftly to reverse these devastating cuts to protect patient access to care before it recesses for the year argues the Surgical Care Coalition.

The MPFS final rule will cut Medicare payments up to nine percent for some surgical subspecialties starting on January 1, 2021. A recent [survey](#) from the Surgical Care Coalition shows these cuts will harm patients by forcing doctors to make extremely difficult decisions like reducing Medicare patient intake, laying off nurses and administrative staff, and not investing in technology.

“When CMS proposed these cuts, surgeons and their patients began raising the alarm that now is not the time to cut health care,” said David B. Hoyt, MD, FACS, American College of Surgeons Executive Director. “There is a bill pending in Congress right now – the Holding Providers Harmless From Medicare Cuts During COVID-19 Act of 2020, introduced by Representatives Bera and Bucshon – which would stop these cuts and protect patient access to surgical care.”

The Surgical Care Coalition urges all members of Congress to join Representatives Ami Bera, MD (CA-7), Larry Bucshon, MD (IN-8) and 54 co-sponsors in support of H.R. 8702, the Holding Providers Harmless From Medicare Cuts During COVID-19 Act of 2020, which will prevent these Medicare payment cuts for two years. This bill will stop the cuts from going into effect on January 1, 2020, protecting patients’ access to surgical care and ensuring no providers experience cuts during a pandemic.

“This rule was a dangerous policy even before the pandemic, and enacting it during the worst health care crisis in a century is unconscionable. If Congress fails to act, it will further strain a health care system that’s already been pushed to the brink due to the COVID-19 pandemic and undermine patient care,” said John A. Wilson, MD, FAANS, FACS, President of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons.

“The bill introduced by Reps. Bera and Bucshon is a win for patients and a win for physicians, and I urge all members of Congress to support it,” said Ronald Dalman, MD, DFSVS, President of the Society for Vascular Surgery. “Our health care system is under extraordinary pressure, and now is the time for Congress to act and protect our patients.”

“Following the publication of this rule, it is more important now than ever that Congress step up and protect patients from these cuts,” said David Glasser, MD, Academy Secretary for Federal Affairs of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. “Especially during a historic pandemic, there should be no cuts to healthcare providers.”

“Congress must now act to protect patients, both now and when the pandemic is over,” said Joseph Dearani, MD, President of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons. “Surgeons around the country want nothing more than to care for their patients, and patients deserve access to that care when and where they need it. These cuts undermine their ability to do so.”

“The issuance of the final rule shows that CMS failed to act, and now Congress must act,” said Eugene Laveroni, D.O., FACOS, President of the American College of Osteopathic Surgeons. “The bill introduced by Reps. Bera and Bucshon takes a holistic approach to protect patients’ access to care and protects surgeons from unnecessary payment cuts during a pandemic.”

Time is running out because Congress needs to take action by the end of the year. In these final days, the Surgical Care Coalition will continue to advocate that Congress stop the Medicare payment cuts and protect patients’ access to surgical care.



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.