

Dear Patient,

Your physician may not be here for much longer. According to Washington's flawed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula, physicians are now due to see a reduction in reimbursement by 21%. This could very well damage our community as deeply as the recent recession.

Understanding that we have a tremendous number of Medicare patients in this community, a 21% reduction will be catastrophic for some practices already having difficulty just getting by. Many physicians in this community have already had to let employees go and it will happen all over again, only worse.

I expect some physician practices will merge in an attempt to survive. Physicians close to retirement may very well do so. Other physicians will simply have to leave their practice seeking other forms of employment. I also doubt that LMHS will be in a position to hire community physicians as the hospitals will also be severely affected by the reduction.

Please understand that this won't just affect Medicare patients. Essentially all of the insurance companies now set their reimbursement rates in proportion to Medicare fees. A reimbursement reduction of 21% by Medicare will also result in a 21% reduction in nearly all insurance reimbursement.

Physician practices may cease taking new Medicare patients. Employees will have to be let go and our fragile local economy will be further harmed. Understanding that medical care is the number one income generator in Lee County when you combine the hospitals and private practices together, the results for this community may be devastating.

As president of the Lee County Medical Society, I have repetitively tried to communicate with our Senators and Representatives in Washington to fix the SGR for once and for all. I am currently in Washington, D.C., for one last attempt to make my point with any legislators that will see me.

If you want to continue to have the quality of care available in this community, if we can hope to recruit young physicians to fill the spots of our aging physician population and not have to wait months to see the remaining physicians, then it is time for the all of you to make your voices heard. This is not about physicians trying to keep their incomes intact as they have already been significantly reduced over the years. This is about quality and access to care and the very survival of our dedicated profession.

I ask you to think of your own physician and wonder what your life will be like if your physician is not there to take care of you.

Please make your voices heard before it is truly too late and contact your U.S. Senators and Representatives. They created the problem and it is up to them to enact a permanent solution.

Craig R. Sweet, M.D.
President, Lee County Medical Society

March 1, 2010

The Honorable Bill Nelson
United States Senate
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0905
FAX 202-228-2183

Dear Senator Nelson:

As a patient who is dependent upon Medicare for my medical care, I am deeply concerned about the cuts to physician payments that became effective on March 1, 2010. I worry about having access to the quality medical care that I have now. I do not want to lose the ability to see my physician.

As you know, the House of Representatives passed important legislation that permanently repeals the flawed sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula and eliminates future projected cuts that will interfere with my doctor's ability to continue to provide quality care for me. Physicians face a 21.2 percent cut to their Medicare payments on March 1 and serious long- term projected cuts unless Congress acts.

I urge you to finally and properly address the Medicare physician payment issue by permanently repealing the SGR now, rather than applying another short-term maneuver to this severe problem that threatens patient access and hampers physician practice operations.

Sincerely,

Signature

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Telephone

email

March 1, 2010

The Honorable George LeMieux
United States Senate
356 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0906
FAX 202-228-5171

Dear Senator LeMieux:

As a patient who is dependent upon Medicare for my medical care, I am deeply concerned about the cuts to physician payments that became effective on March 1, 2010. I worry about having access to the quality medical care that I have now. I do not want to lose the ability to see my physician.

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