

December 14, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

You may have heard that due to a variety of technical changes the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) included in the 2010 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, nearly all services performed by cardiologists will see payment cuts ranging from 10 to more than 40 percent over four years starting on January 1, 2010. The undersigned cardiovascular organizations ask that you cosponsor legislation to be introduced by Rep. Charlie Gonzalez to mitigate the cuts to cardiovascular services while allowing payment increases to other specialties included in the fee schedule to be implemented.

These cuts are separate from current health reform efforts and do not include the 21.2 percent Medicare physician payment cut due to the sustainable growth rate (SGR). The impact on individual cardiovascular practices varies depending on a practice's mix of service. For instance, a practice that provides myocardial perfusion imaging will see a 36 percent cut in payments for that service in 2010, and a practice that provides echocardiography will see a 35 percent cut in payments for that service over the four year phase-in. It is causing many practices to take drastic measures according to a recent survey:

- 60 percent of private practice cardiology plans staff layoffs
- 46 percent of private practice cardiology plans to eliminate service lines
- 17 percent of private practice cardiology will stop accepting Medicare
- the majority of private practice cardiology will integrate (46 percent) or already has integrated (19 percent) into a hospital system

A big portion of these cuts are related to practice expense. CMS chose to use flawed data from the AMA's Physician Practice Information Survey to determine the practice expense component of physician payments. The cardiovascular community has serious concerns about validity of the survey process and the quality of the data. We need your help and the help of your colleagues to direct CMS to review its methodology for computing practice expenses.

We have made remarkable strides in the fight against cardiovascular disease as a direct result of advancements in medical imaging, medications, and care over the past few decades. These drastic cuts are a step backwards and will negatively impact the remarkable gains. Please contact Julie Hart in Rep. Charlie Gonzalez' office at [Julie.Hart@mail.house.gov](mailto:Julie.Hart@mail.house.gov) or 202.225.3236 to cosponsor the legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American College of Cardiology  
American Society of Echocardiography  
American Society of Nuclear Cardiology  
Association of Black Cardiologists  
Cardiology Advocacy Alliance  
Heart Failure Society of America  
Heart Rhythm Society  
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions  
Society for Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance  
Society of Cardiovascular Computed Tomography