



Sound Policy. Quality Care.

July 1, 2009

Honorable Max Baucus
511 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Kent Conrad
530 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus and Chairman Conrad:

As the Alliance of Specialty Medicine, our mission is to advocate for sound federal health care policy that fosters patient access to the highest quality specialty care and improves timely access to high quality medical care for all Americans. As patient and physician advocates, the Alliance supports your recently introduced bill – S. 1213, the ***“Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Act of 2009.”***

The Alliance is pleased with your comprehensive focus on comparative effectiveness research (CER), including the provisions to ensure transparency, public input, and patient safeguards. Like you, the Alliance believes CER should enhance information about treatment options and outcomes for patients and physicians, helping them to choose the care that best meets the individual needs of the patient (including quality-of-life measures); a CER entity should not be a vehicle for making centralized coverage and payment decisions or recommendations; and it should focus on *clinical* effectiveness.

We also greatly appreciate that you have included language to ensure that relevant specialists and subspecialists must be included as members of expert advisory panels that are convened to conduct CER. In addition, we are pleased that your bill further provides for the establishment of advisory panels for rare diseases, which many of our physicians treat. Since patients may respond differently to the same intervention, the Alliance feels strongly that the needs of the individual must be taken into consideration. We are therefore pleased that your bill also ensures that CER recognizes the diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, of patient populations and subpopulations and communicates results in ways that reflect the differences in individual patient needs.

To ensure an open and transparent CER process, the Alliance prefers your public-private funding partnership and independent structure of CER. CER analyses, by their very design, are oftentimes very complicated. Therefore, we appreciate your efforts to ensure that they are appropriately designed without strong government influence.

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As you work to get this legislation enacted, the Alliance also urges you to include medical liability protections for health care providers when they follow practice guidelines recommended by the CER entity. In addition, the Alliance strongly encourages you to increase the number of physicians on the board as compared to payers and to ensure that the chair of the Board is a physician. A greater physician presence will better represent the diversity of medical and surgical specialties as well as better focus the Board on decisions related to health care quality, not cost.

Thank you for commitment and leadership on this issue. We look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this important legislation. Please contact Vicki Hart if you have any questions or would like additional information. Ms. Hart may be reached at 202 -441-3515 or vhart@hhstrategies.com.

Sincerely,

American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Gastroenterological Association
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Urological Association
Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Heart Rhythm Society
National Association of Spine Specialists
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions