



**A Coalition of 14 Medical Societies Representing
more than 200,000 Specialty Physicians in the United States**

John D. Barnes, Chair
jbarnes@aad.org
(202) 842-3555

Gordon Wheeler, Vice-Chair
gwheeler@acep.org
(202) 728-0610

November 18, 2003

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the undersigned members of the Alliance of Specialty Medicine, a coalition of 14 medical societies representing more than 200,000 specialty physicians in the United States supports passage of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Modernization and Improvement Act.

We appreciate the hard work that you and your staff have done on this bill. The Alliance strongly supports comprehensive Medicare reform that will help ensure Medicare's survival into the future and provide quality health care for present and future beneficiaries. Thank you for creating legislation that enables further progress toward these goals. We acknowledge the effort put forth on this bill, and offer our support for the passage of this legislation.

The Alliance would like to thank you for your efforts to avert the 4.5% reduction in physician payments under Medicare that would otherwise occur January 1, 2004. We support the 1.5% increase in physician payments as a temporary fix, which, we understand, is included in the legislation for years 2004 and 2005.

The Alliance appreciates that the E-prescribing provision in the Medicare bill has been made voluntary, and that the ICD-10 issue has been resolved so that physicians are not faced with a complicated, new coding system. The Alliance is also appreciative that the legislation provides much needed relief from the complex and burdensome Medicare regulations that often impede rather than improve health care access for seniors.

While the Alliance supports the passage of this bill, we remain steadfast in the belief that if Medicare is to survive in the future, then the Medicare payment formula must be permanently fixed and reimbursements to physicians must be stabilized. Today's unstable system is characterized by wide swings in payments from year to year.

We are grateful for the assurances received so far from the conferees and leadership who say that they will work on a long-term solution to the systemic flaws in the Medicare physician reimbursement formula when the new session of Congress begins next year.

American Academy of Dermatology Association • American Association of Neurological Surgeons/Congress of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons • American College of Cardiology • American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists • American College of Radiology Association
American Gastroenterological Association • American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology • American Society of Cataract & Refractive Surgery
American Urological Association • National Association of Spine Specialists • Society of Thoracic Surgeons

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The Alliance looks forward to working with you to address these critical issues and to fix the systemic flaws in the physician reimbursement formula. We are committed to working with you to ensure that affordable and quality health care continues to be available to present and future Medicare beneficiaries.

For further information, or if you have any questions, please contact the Chairs of the Alliance of Specialty Medicine Medicare Workgroup, Ann LaBelle at alabelle@acep.org or 202/728-0610 and Nancey McCann at nmccann@ascrs.org or 703/591-2220.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Association of Neurological Surgeons/Congress of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Cardiology
American College of Emergency Physicians
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