



Media Contact:
McKerns Development
Leslie McKerns
mckerns@bellsouth.net

Palm Beach Spine & Pain Institute | Innovative Solutions to Pain Management
Lawrence Gorfine, M.D. Douglas MacLear, D.O. Board Certified | Anesthesiology & Pain Management

Impending Drastic Cuts to Medicare Reimbursement Affecting 86% of Americans

NEWS RELEASE

LAKE WORTH, FL – Lawrence Gorfine, M.D., Board Certified Anesthesiologist, Second Vice President of the Palm Beach County Medical Society (PBCMS), Member of the Board of Directors, and co-founder of the Palm Beach Spine & Pain Institute announces significant and impending cuts to the physician reimbursement Medicare program.

"Most critical is to stop the 2008 scheduled cuts, that if allowed to go into effect, will create a catastrophic series of events in the medical community including restriction in access to quality healthcare available for all Americans, not just Medicare beneficiaries," says Dr. Gorfine.

We are running out of time. About 18 months ago, just prior to his departure as chairman of the Federal Reserve board, Alan Greenspan was speaking to a small group on the Hill. He was asked about the future of Medicare, and his response was somewhat surprising. He was less concerned about the overall solvency of the program as he was about "having anyone there to provide the services required."

So reports Rep. Michael C. Burgess, M.D., Chairman of the Republican policy Committee, in a June, 2007 article, *The Cure to the Physician Crisis*, in Washington D.C.'s, *The Hill*. "Over the years, cuts to Medicare physician payments have been averted by creative legislating, and Congress will once again need to find a solution to halt a cut of 10 percent to the physician payment rate in 2008."

In fact, the American Medical Association (AMA) reports, "Without congressional action, Medicare will cut physician payments nearly 40 percent over the next nine years, while practice costs increase at least 20 percent"—and in a 2006 poll, the AMA reported that 7 out of 10 American were not aware of the cuts, but when informed, 86% were concerned about the lack of care that will be available to Medicare patients. The AMA website <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/16792.html> has posted an online content kit about these Medicare reimbursement issues.

2290 10th Avenue North, Suite 600
Lake Worth | Florida | 33461
(561) 649-8770 | FAX (561) 649-0570
help@helpain.com

The cuts, if enacted, will result in fewer physicians accepting Medicare patients. Patients, who can still find a physician accepting Medicare reimbursement, will find themselves with doctors having less time for individual consultation, care and follow up. Long-term consequences for American healthcare are also predicted as a result of the cuts – fewer students pursuing a career in medicine, and those who do, less often choosing positions within primary care fields.

Dr. Gorfine notes the cuts to Medicare physician reimbursement will mean many types of treatment will not be covered. The American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians (ASIPP) states, The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has proposed major changes to the Ambulatory Surgical Center (ASC) payment system currently under review by (CMS). Without exaggeration, this proposed payment reform will be devastating to interventional pain management.

- Interventional pain physicians face as much as 30% cuts for interventional procedures performed in an office setting over a period of 4 years, unrelated to the global cuts. Based on the news media and reports, it appears that Medicare physician rates will plummet by 46% by the year 2015. However, the Medicare Economic Index which underestimates the costs shows that from 2001 to 2016, practice costs increased 34.5%. The Medicare Economic Index projects increases of 34.5% from 2001 to 2016 while real life medical practice inflation from 2001 to 2016 is expected to be 90%.
- A second issue of concern relates to ambulatory surgery center payment cuts for interventional pain management procedures. This is one of the most effective locations for these procedures to be performed, along with offices. Since the Government has decided to cut offices and ASCs, we will be forced to go to hospitals which will be an ineffective and more expensive setting. It appears to be criminal to punish both the most effective interventional pain management settings, namely the offices, and ASCs, with draconian cuts, which will again affect our access to services.

Dr. Gorfine asks concerned citizens to write to their Senators and Representatives urging them to intervene against the planned Medicare cuts to physician reimbursement. The American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians ASIPP has posted suggested content for contacting legislators about the impending cuts:

<http://capwiz.com/asipp/issues/alert/?alertid=10191446&type=ML>

To reach Lawrence Gorfine, M.D. or to schedule an interview. Dr. Gorfine is available to discuss: The four top issues with regard to the medical profession today:

1. Poor reimbursement for medical services - based upon the government's formula, the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR), which is tied to the Gross National Product and to the cost of pharmacy drugs.

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2. Over regulation and punitive rules and laws regulating the medical profession.
3. Inability to prescribe medical care as HMO's, Insurance Companies and others dictate, forcing the physicians to authorize all sorts of diagnostics and treatments.
4. Fear of unwarranted lawsuits from and State and Federal investigations for compliance with hundreds of rules and regulations.

Contact: Leslie McKerns, McKerns Development
561-305-4264; mckerns@mckernsdevelopment.com

In Florida, Federal Lawmakers are:

Senators: Bill Nelson, www.billnelson.senate.gov, Mel Martinez, www.martinez.senate.gov,
Representatives: Tim Mahoney, District 16, www.mahoney.house.gov, Ron Klein, District
22, ron.klein@mail.house.gov, Alcee Hastings, District 23, www.house.gov/alceehastings.

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About Palm Beach Spine & Pain Institute:

Palm Beach Spine & Pain Institute is located at 2290 10th Avenue North, Suite 600, Lake Worth, FL 33461, centrally located near Wellington, Royal Palm Beach, West Palm Beach, Palm Beach Gardens, Boca Raton and Ft. Lauderdale, FL Founders are Board Certified Specialists in Anesthesiology, Pain Medicine and Management, Lawrence Gorfine, M.D. and Douglas MacLear, D.O.

At Palm Beach Spine & Pain Institute, board-certified physicians are dedicated to stopping pain. They specialize in performing innovative, minimally invasive techniques and procedures that eliminate pain at its source. The goal is to allow patients to return to a normal activity level — minus the pain. <http://www.helpain.com>

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