



Tell Congress: Two Cuts are Too Much for Hospice

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Just weeks ago, the hospice community heard the good news that implementation of the regulatory rate cuts associated with the elimination of the Budget Neutrality Adjustment Factor (BNAF) were going to be spread out over seven years, instead of being harshly phased in over just two years. This was the result of an 18-month long, tireless advocacy effort to educate Congress on the high-quality, compassionate care delivered by hospice.

While we are grateful to President Obama and Congress for softening the impact of the BNAF cuts, we must remember that the BNAF cuts have not been eliminated. The hospice community is still facing full elimination of the BNAF by 2015, which is a permanent reimbursement reduction of nearly 3 percent.

Additionally, in all of the health care reform proposals currently being considered by Congress, Medicare providers-including hospice-are being asked to undertake a "productivity adjustment" to their future rates to help finance the cost of health reform. For the hospice community, this would mean an additional reimbursement reduction of nearly 12 percent by 2019.

The combined impact of these two cuts, the BNAF and the proposed health care reform reductions, would be a phased 14.3 percent cut to hospice by 2019. This represents a loss of more than \$10 billion in the national investment in hospice over the next decade.

As more eligible Medicare beneficiaries elect hospice care and with average margins of 3.4 percent, the hospice community would be devastated by the combined impact of the two cuts. There is no doubt that many programs will be forced to close, and access to compassionate, high-quality end-of-life care will be severely compromised.

We believe that this is an unintended consequence of the current health care reform proposals, and it is up to Hospice Advocates to make sure that Congress is aware of what is at stake before it is too late. We must make sure that the voices of the 1.4 million patients, and their families, who depend on hospice each year are not lost in the drive for reform .

The time to act is now. Send a message to your members of Congress today.

Tell them that "Two Cuts are Too Much for Hospice."

This is just the beginning of this effort for the hospice community. We're going to have to keep the pressure on through the committee consideration this month, and well through the fall as the House and Senate debate the final package. So, stay tuned and recruit your friends to join the fight for hospice.