

October 19, 2007

Acting Administrator Kerry Weems  
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Weems:

The undersigned organizations are writing to urge CMS to provide the utmost flexibility for the inclusion of physician quality measures in the 2008 Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI). We are concerned that CMS regulatory and administrative deadlines have the potential to delay implementation of a number of important measures developed in 2007. As a result many physicians will not have an opportunity to participate in the PQRI until 2009.

The urgency of this request is further exacerbated by the PQRI's incentive structure and CMS's proposal for continuing its funding it through 2008. Despite recommendations by MedPAC that the \$1.35 billion Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2007 (TRHCA) Physician Assistance and Quality Improvement fund "be directed entirely toward a conversion factor update for 2008," CMS chose to use it exclusively to fund the PQRI, indicating that this is the "best way to ensure physicians get the greatest benefit from the Fund's resources." Under this approach, in order for physicians to receive even minor relief from the scheduled 10% cut in Medicare payment next year they must participate in the PQRI.

Unlike hospitals, which are fairly homogeneous in terms of the services provided, the reality of physician care makes a one-size fits all approach impossible. CMS recognized this diversity by including 74 quality measures in the original 2007 PQRI, far greater than the 10 measures in Medicare's first hospital reporting program. Even so, many physicians still cannot participate in PQRI due to a lack of measures that are applicable to the patients and conditions they treat.

TRHCA section 101 requires that PQRI quality measures "shall be measures that have been adopted or endorsed by a consensus organization (such as the National Quality Forum or AQA), that include measures that have been submitted by a physician specialty, and that the Secretary identifies as having used a consensus-based process for developing such measures." A number of quality measures developed this year will meet this criteria but were either not included in the July 12, 2007 PQRI Proposed Rule or, we understand may not meet various internal CMS administrative deadlines.

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We strongly urge CMS to include all measures in the 2008 PQRI that meet statutory consensus development and endorsement/adoption requirements prior to the November 15, 2007 deadline set forth in TRHCA. Your flexibility in this regard is critical. It is incumbent on CMS to do everything in its power to see that all eligible measures are included in the 2008 program.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Dermatology Association  
American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine  
American Academy of Neurology  
American Academy of Ophthalmology  
American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery  
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation  
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases  
American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists  
American Association of Clinical Urologists  
American Association of Medical Colleges  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons  
American College of Physicians  
American College of Radiology  
American College of Rheumatology  
American College of Surgeons  
American Gastroenterological Association  
American Geriatrics Society  
American Medical Association  
American Medical Directors Association  
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics  
American Rhinologic Society  
American Society for Clinical Pathology  
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology  
American Society of Anesthesiologists  
American Society of Clinical Oncology  
American Society of General Surgeons  
American Society of Hematology  
American Society of Pediatric Nephrology  
American Society of Plastic Surgeons  
American Thoracic Society  
American Urogynecologic Society  
American Urological Association  
Association of American Medical Colleges

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College of American Pathologists  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
Medical Group Management Association  
Renal Physicians Association  
Society for Vascular Surgery  
Society of Gynecologic Oncologists  
Society of Interventional Radiology  
Society of Nuclear Medicine  
Society of Thoracic Surgeons  
The Endocrine Society