



**For Immediate Release**

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## **MEDICARE CUTS CRIPPLE DENVER PATIENTS' ACCESS TO CARDIOLOGY CARE**

*Thousands of Denver Patients to be Affected as Cardiology Practices in Denver are Forced to Reduce Staff, Close Offices and Eliminate Services due to 2010 Medicare Cuts*

Denver, CO – As early as January, two of Denver's largest cardiovascular care practices could be forced to cut back on patient services, including closing clinics, and reducing staff due to Medicare reimbursement cuts.

South Denver Cardiology Associates and Aurora Denver Cardiology Associates combine to treat approximately 1,000 patients per day in the Denver metropolitan area and are just two of the practices that will be affected. The Medicare cuts, which reduce Medicare reimbursements for tests and procedures, will reduce Medicare payments by up to 40 percent to all cardiovascular practices in the country. The cuts will take effect January 1.

South Denver Cardiology will likely eliminate its patient education and disease prevention programs as well as completely eliminate services to the uninsured. The Medicare cuts could necessitate a 20 percent staff reduction at South Denver Cardiology. Other cutbacks could include closing satellite offices and community clinics, and reducing hours.

"Every cardiovascular practice in the state is being forced to cut back. No business can sustain a 40 percent cut and continue to operate as it did," South Denver Cardiology CEO Brenda Lambert said. "We have these programs because they help our patients, but with these cuts any program that doesn't support itself will have to go. We want to educate our patients and help them lead better lives, but we can't sacrifice the viability of the practice itself."

Anticipating the Medicare cuts, Aurora Denver Cardiology Associates has been unable to fill 10 positions this year and is considering closing at least one office while consolidating services and reducing diagnostic testing. Office closures would force some patients to travel more than an additional hour for treatments.

"Our staff has not had a raise since 2007," Aurora Denver Cardiology CEO Ina Roberts said. "Our people have been sacrificing to ensure that patients get the best possible care, but with a 40 percent cut we, like every cardiology practice in the country, will have to make some very hard decisions that will greatly impact our patients."

The Medicare cuts are based on a survey that includes data from just 55 of the nearly 40,000 cardiovascular practices in the United States. The survey results were not validated by Medicare, as is required.

“Despite the unprecedented success by the cardiovascular community in reducing the mortality due to heart disease by 27 percent over the past three years, cardiology was targeted for an almost 40 percent reduction in Medicare fees across all services,” said Denver cardiologist Eugene Sherman, who is the governor of the Colorado chapter of the American College of Cardiology. “The result of these cuts will be reduction, in many cases drastic reductions, in our patients’ ability to receive care as many practices will be forced to close.”

### **About the American College of Cardiology**

The American College of Cardiology is leading the way to optimal cardiovascular care and disease prevention. The College is a 37,000-member nonprofit medical society and bestows the credential Fellow of the American College of Cardiology upon physicians who meet its stringent qualifications. The College is a leader in the formulation of health policy, standards and guidelines, and is a staunch supporter of cardiovascular research. The ACC provides professional education and operates national registries for the measurement and improvement of quality care. More information about the association is available online at [www.acc.org](http://www.acc.org).

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