



MSDC News Release

Contact: Christopher Lee
lee@msdc.org
(202) 355-9414 office
(859) 806-7414 cell

MSDC NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Medicare Patients and Physicians in DC Join Petition Drive to Call on Congress for Medicare Reform

Washington, DC- The Medical Society of the District of Columbia has announced today that it has joined 49 other state medical societies and 12 national specialty societies in petitioning Congress to permanently reform Medicare and protect critical access to medical care for seniors.

The petition, "Stop the Medicare Meltdown," began as a program from the Texas Medical Association but has grown into a nationwide petition drive. The petition urges Congress to fix the flawed payment formula that threatens care for our nation's Medicare recipients, including senior citizens and people with disabilities, and 850,000 military family members covered by TriCare.

Under the current Medicare model, every physician who treats a Medicare patient will face a 21% cut in reimbursement, placing enormous financial strain on each medical practice to continue treating Medicare patients.

"For a Medicare patient, hearing, 'I'm sorry, but I just can't afford to accept Medicare any longer and stay in practice,' is devastating," said MSDC President Peter E. Lavine, MD. "Some patients have been seeing the same doctor for 10, 20 years. Going out and finding another doctor is just not an option for these senior patients."

Each year, Congress has passed legislation that postpones pay cuts for one year. Each time this is done, the pay cut grows. The most recent cut, 21.2 percent, went into effect on April 1st, April Fools' Day, and Congress is expected to place another temporary patch on the problem when it reconvenes. It would be the third patch this year alone. "This last-minute waiting game hurts patients and their doctors. Patients need to know their doctor will be there when they need them, and doctors need to be able to trust the Medicare administrators over the long term," Dr. Lavine adds.

Dr. Jack Lewin, CEO of the American College of Cardiology, agrees. "Over 40 percent of Medicare dollars are spent fighting our nation's number one killer, heart disease. Cardiologists see everyday how failing to permanently fix Medicare's physician reimbursement formula limits patient access and ultimately drives up the cost of delivering health care. That's why we were happy to become the first national specialty group to encourage our members to sign this petition to stop Medicare's meltdown."

"Month-long 'fixes' just won't work," Dr. Lavine continues. "We need more than that. We need an actual solution. This is all about Medicare patients' access to physicians' care – getting them into a doctor's office with a doctor waiting to see them. Congress created this problem, and only Congress can fix it. Our seniors, persons with disabilities and military families deserve better than this unfair situation. I hope Congress sees this and makes the much-needed fixes to Medicare."

Doctors can recount numerous occasions when their Medicare patients ask them if they know of other physicians — both specialists and primary care — who will see and care for others who are just joining Medicare. Finding doctors to care for new Medicare patients is a constant struggle, they say.

MSDC doctors invite their patients in the District to join the grassroots effort to save Medicare by signing the online petition. The petition calls upon Congress to stop the Medicare meltdown so patients can choose their doctors and their doctors can stay in the program.

A link to an easy-to-complete online petition is at www.MeAndMyDoctor.com and <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/meltdown/>.

Congress just passed major health system reform legislation without solving the Medicare problem. “We’ve heard over and over again how important it is to ‘keep what’s great about the American health care system and fix what’s wrong,’ Medicare has been identified for years as the most important piece of the system that is broken, and we still don’t fix it,” says Dr. Lavine. “That is neglectful, unjustifiable and irresponsible.”

The Medical Society of the District of Columbia is dedicated to the well-being of physicians and their patients in metropolitan Washington, DC. MSDC is a member of the American Medical Association's federation of state, county and medical specialty organizations. Approximately 2,000 physicians and medical students are MSDC members.