



January 20, 2012

The Honorable John Barrasso
The Honorable Max Baucus
The Honorable Xavier Becerra
The Honorable Kevin Brady
The Honorable Dave Camp
The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Bob Casey
The Honorable Mike Crapo
The Honorable Renee Ellmers
The Honorable Nan Hayworth

The Honorable Jon Kyl
The Honorable Sander Levin
The Honorable Tom Price
The Honorable Jack Reed
The Honorable Tom Reed
The Honorable Allyson Schwartz
The Honorable Fred Upton
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
The Honorable Greg Walden
The Honorable Henry Waxman

Dear Conferee:

On behalf of the American Geriatrics Society, a not-for-profit organization comprised of over 6,000 health professionals who are devoted to improving the health, independence and quality of life of all older people, we write to express our deep concerns over proposed Medicare payment reductions for hospital outpatient evaluation and management (E&M) services.

While AGS has long supported a long-term fix to the Medicare physician payment formula, we are concerned about cuts to E&M services being used as offsets to pay for the fix. Such across the board cuts to these services, without regard to specialty and specific patient needs, will be detrimental to seniors with multiple and chronic conditions. The proposed cuts will undermine outpatient geriatric programs, which are frequently the one community source for interdisciplinary care for the frail elderly and are the training ground for geriatrics health professionals.

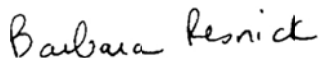
As an organization of geriatricians, nurses and other health professionals specializing in the care of the elderly, a large number of our members provide and direct coordinated, patient-centered care in hospital-based geriatrics clinics. In addition to serving as a safety net for our most vulnerable members of society, HOPDs provide many services not available in physicians' offices, including coordinated and interdisciplinary team based care for older patients with multiple chronic conditions. Seniors' continued access to these high-quality services is critical to reducing the number of preventable and costly hospital readmissions, as well as facilitating care transitions across settings.

With our nation's population of seniors growing at an unprecedented rate, now is the time to ensure that our nation's geriatrics health providers have the resources and training to deliver high-quality and efficient services to Medicare beneficiaries. In fact, the number of adults 85 and over are growing at four times the rate of the rest of the population and encounters greater overall disability, as well as need for medical and other support services.

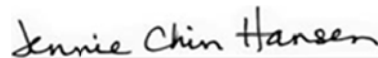
While we agree it is critical that we overhaul the flawed payment system, we ask that you recognize that these proposed offsets would seriously undermine the quality of care delivered to our nation's most vulnerable seniors. We must fix Medicare's unworkable physician payment system but not at the expense of our nation's growing number of elderly patients with multiple and complex conditions.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Alanna Goldstein, Assistant Director, Public Affairs and Advocacy, at agoldstein@americangeriatrics.org or 212-308-1414.

Sincerely,



Barbara Resnick, PhD, CRNP, FAAN, FAANP
President



Jennie Chin Hansen, RN, MS, FAAN
Chief Executive Officer