

Lobbying Effort Puts Medicare Caps on Chiropractic Care on Hold

HHS SECRETARY MANDATES REVIEW OF PROPOSAL

Editorial Staff

ARLINGTON, Va. - In response to concerns raised by the American Chiropractic Association, Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley and a bipartisan group of members of Congress, Health and Human Services (HHS) Sec. Tommy Thompson stopped a Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) proposal from going into effect Oct. 1. Had the proposal been implemented as planned, it would have allowed insurance carriers to begin to impose arbitrary caps, or "frequency limits," on the chiropractic services Medicare beneficiaries can receive. HHS officials informed the ACA on Oct. 1 that the proposal would not go into effect, and that it would be reviewed further at the department's highest level.

"Today's decision is an enormous boost to the ACA's effort to correct a flawed and misguided policy," said ACA Chair George McClelland, DC. "If this scheme had been allowed to take effect as planned, Medicare patients would have faced unconscionable and unfair denials from carriers for the chiropractic care that they need. Hopefully, Secretary Thompson's review will result in a positive, long-term solution that safeguards the right of Medicare beneficiaries to fully and freely access medically necessary services from a doctor of chiropractic."

The ACA had worked with the Iowa Chiropractic Society (ICS) and the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC) to defeat the frequency limit proposal since it was announced on May 28. In the weeks leading up to the day the proposal was scheduled to go into effect, Sen. Grassley and other leading members of Congress joined the effort and urged Sec. Thompson to take immediate corrective action.

Lawmakers who joined with Sen. Grassley on the issue included Reps. Leonard Boswell (D-Iowa), Eric Cantor (R-Va.), John Linder (R-Ga.) and Earl Pomeroy (D-N.D.), and Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Neb.). As a result of their effort, HHS is expected to release an updated policy transmittal to Medicare carriers, which will be thoroughly reviewed by the ACA, ICS and ACC.

"The ACA commends Secretary Thompson, Senators Grassley and Nelson, and Congressmen Pomeroy, Cantor, Linder and Boswell for the actions they've taken to date," said ACA President Donald Krippendorf, DC. "These are leaders who have taken an important stand for an important cause. Every ACA member should know that his organization will be working hard to guard against any similar effort - or revised scheme - that might surface in the weeks and months ahead."

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