

July 29, 2009

Honorable Max Baucus, Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Charles Grassley, Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Charles B. Rangel, Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Dave Camp, Ranking Member
House Ways and Means Committee
341 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Henry A. Waxman, Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2109 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable George Miller, Chairman
House Education and Labor Committee
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable John Kline, Ranking Member
House Education and Labor Committee
1210 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of Congress,

As patient advocates who understand how medical imaging improves health outcomes and reduces health care costs, we are deeply concerned that additional unwarranted cuts to medical imaging will hamper our fight against these deadly diseases. Medical imaging is a powerful tool used in the prevention, detection, and treatment of our most serious diseases. We urge you to consider the value that these life-saving technologies bring to patient care as you work to enact reforms that improve the quality and efficiency of health care.

We urge you to build on provisions that were included in the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008, which required that all facilities and providers that perform imaging services for Medicare beneficiaries be accredited by 2012 and created a demonstration to test the use of appropriateness criteria for imaging services. These steps will help to ensure that medical imaging is used properly and that patients get the right scan at the right time. We believe that Congress should expand its current efforts to promote physician-developed appropriateness criteria for imaging.

Additionally, we want to express our opposition to two recent policy proposals related to medical imaging: the inclusion of radiology benefit managers (RBMs) in the President's 2010 Budget, and proposed further reductions to medical imaging reimbursement through an increase in the utilization rate assumption for certain imaging equipment. Both of these proposals will restrict access to life-saving imaging services.

RBMs, which use a burdensome "prior authorization" system whereby physicians must receive approval from an RBM before ordering an imaging service for a patient, take health care decisions

out of the hands of doctors and patients and put them in the hands of for-profit companies whose sole purpose is to restrict the use of imaging services. As a result, patients are often denied the imaging studies their physicians believe are warranted, or are forced to wait days or weeks to receive them. Delays are particularly burdensome for the elderly and for patients in rural areas of the country, who often must travel a hundred miles or more to access medical imaging services. Such delays and denials often exacerbate patients' conditions, causing them to need more intensive or invasive treatments later.

Furthermore, adopting MedPAC's proposal to increase the utilization assumption for certain imaging equipment including CTs and MRIs will result in additional draconian cuts for imaging services. These additional cuts would come at a time when the GAO and other Medicare claims analyses have found that the deep cuts imposed by the Deficit Reduction Act have already significantly reduced Medicare spending on imaging (one analysis revealed that spending on advanced imaging is down 19.2%) and dramatically slowed the growth of advanced imaging services (the same study showed that the volume of these services has grown only 1.9% in the last year). Further cuts will undoubtedly reduce seniors' access to these imaging services that are so important for detection, diagnosis and treatment.

As you work with your colleagues in the U.S. Congress and the Administration to move forward with the important work of health care reform, we urge you to support the continued implementation of proactive policies to promote physicians' adherence to appropriateness criteria that will enable patients to get the right scan at the right time. We also hope that you will oppose the use of RBMs in Medicare, unjustified increases to the utilization rate assumption, and any other arbitrary cuts to reimbursement that will result in restricted access to important and medically-necessary imaging services.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

American Brain Tumor Association
 American Federation for Aging Research
 American Pain Foundation
 Black Women's Health Imperative
 Brain Injury Association of America
 Breast Cancer Network of Strength (formerly Y-ME)
 Colon Cancer Alliance
 Colorectal Cancer Coalition
 Kidney Cancer Association
 Lung Cancer Alliance
 Men's Health Network
 National Osteoporosis Foundation
 National Ovarian Cancer Coalition
 Society for Women's Health Research
 US Too International

