

APRIL 2021

Advocacy Monthly



What topics would you like to read about in the next edition of *Advocacy Monthly*? The Society would like your feedback and suggestions in order to provide you with the most relevant resources and information. Please send your feedback to communications@sts.org.

Medicare Cuts Paused Until End of Year

The delayed implementation of mandated 2% Medicare reimbursement cuts will extend through December 31. The "[Act to Prevent Across-the-Board Direct Spending Cuts, and for Other Purposes](#)," which provides an additional 9-month extension, was signed into law on April 14. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is expected to release previously held claims with dates of service on or after April 1 and reprocess any claims paid with the reduction applied. STS members do not need to take any action.

Lung Cancer Screening NCD Expected to Reopen

[CMS has accepted a request](#) from STS, the GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer, and the American College of Radiology (ACR) to reopen its National Coverage Determination (NCD) for low-dose computed tomography lung cancer screening. The ask was made after the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) expanded the exclusion criteria for lung cancer screening. CMS, however, advised that the NCD process may be postponed due to "internal capacity restraints." The Society will continue to monitor and provide updates.

Major Private Insurers Urged to Update Lung Cancer Screening Policies

STS, GO2, and ACR also sent [joint letters](#) to the five largest private insurers with a request to immediately update their lung

cancer screening coverage policies in accordance with the new USPSTF guidelines. Private insurers have 1 year from the start of the next plan year to implement changes, but the letters encouraged the companies to updated coverage policies as soon as possible “in order to allow patients access to this lifesaving screening tool.”

Serious Concerns about Prior Authorization Shared with CMS

STS is among the organizations that sent a [letter to the acting CMS administrator](#) expressing growing concerns that the proposed expansion of prior authorization requirements will interfere with access to medically necessary procedures and unnecessarily delay care. In the letter, the signatories requested that CMS suspend prior authorization requirements until the agency considers feedback from beneficiaries and other stakeholders and then establishes specific criteria. Prior authorization is an administrative process in which providers seek advance payer approval for a medical service, prescription, or supply. Historically, this tool has been reserved for use in very limited circumstances.

STS Demands Availability of Real-Time MIPS Info

The Society has joined the American Medical Association and other groups in a [letter to CMS](#) requesting the release of detailed information related to the 2018, 2019, and 2020 Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) cost measures. The agency has never published MIPS cost measure benchmarks, despite using these metrics to evaluate physician and group performance in the MIPS Cost Performance Category. The letter also recommends that, moving forward, cost measure benchmarks be available on a rolling, “close to real-time” basis.

Advocacy Extras

- The Society submitted its [official comments](#) on the Medicare Coverage of Innovative Technology (MCIT) pathway and the definition of “reasonable and necessary,” which is included in the MCIT final rule. STS shared disappointment that CMS did not include a requirement for continued evidence gathering in the MCIT final rule and, thus, strongly urged the agency to reconsider. “The collection of real-world evidence is a powerful

tool to help ensure that innovative technology remains safe and effective,” the comments read.

- In a [letter to House leaders](#), the Society and other organizations expressed their support for the [Eliminating the Provider Relief Fund Tax Penalties Act of 2020](#) (H.R. 2079) bill. Importantly, this legislation would remove negative tax implications on the financial relief that health care professionals receive through the Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund.
- STS and more than 30 other associations sent a [letter to House and Senate leaders](#), urging appropriators to provide at least \$322 million in funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH). Within the NCEH is the [National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network](#), which collects state and local health, exposure, and hazard data for environmental public health surveillance. The increased funding would help expand the program to allow for better data collection.
- Join STS surgeon leaders and the STS-PAC Board of Advisors on Thursday, May 20, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. ET, for the second event in the virtual [STS-PAC Speaker Series](#). US Senator John Boozman, OD (R-AR) will talk about his work on health care policy and advocacy. He also will answer questions from STS members and be presented with the Society’s Legislator of the Year Award. This series is open to all 2021 STS-PAC contributors; an RSVP is required. For more information, contact advocacy@sts.org.



The Society
of Thoracic
Surgeons

633 N. Saint Clair St., Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611
312-202-5800



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