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Advocacy Monthly



Reimbursement for CT Surgery under Continued Threat in Proposed PFS Rule

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) once again is recommending severe cuts to cardiothoracic surgery reimbursement. Unless Congress intervenes, cardiothoracic surgeons could see a 4% cut to Medicare payment with additional cuts of more than 4% also scheduled to hit later this year. In 2021, lawmakers acted at the last minute to add more money to the Medicare program and delay the implementation of other cuts, but those fixes are only in effect for 2022. The agency announced its plans in the proposed [Physician Fee Schedule](#) (PFS) released earlier this month.

STS is preparing its formal comments on the rule and will continue to pursue long-term solutions to prevent this threat to the specialty—both individually and as part of the Surgical Care Coalition. The final rule, scheduled to go into effect on January 1, likely will be published in November.

In addition, the Society joined a long list of organizations in a [letter to Congressional leaders](#), requesting that they “begin immediate deliberations to identify and advance policies to mitigate the forthcoming reimbursement cuts.”

Register Today for Advocacy Conference in DC

With the battle against Medicare reimbursement cuts heating up again, it is more important than ever to take action. The Society strongly encourages members to attend the [STS Advocacy Conference](#) in Washington, DC, September 13-14, and help influence health care policy and champion causes important to the specialty.



Coalition Presses Congress to ‘Build Upon’ Its Investment in Physician Workforce

The Graduate Medical Education (GME) Advocacy Coalition—which includes the Society—recently [sent a letter](#) to Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), urging them to include in the budget reconciliation bill policies that would increase Medicare support for GME. While Congress made a critical initial investment in the physician workforce by providing 1,000 new Medicare-supported GME positions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, the Coalition stated that they should “build upon the historic investment in the health care workforce” and help address the growing physician shortage. The US is facing a shortage of up to 124,000 physicians by 2034.

Lawsuit Threatens Access, Affordability of Preventive Care

The Society joined 60 organizations in [signing a letter](#) in which they express “extreme concern” that an adverse ruling in the federal case *Kelley v. Becerra* would result in millions of privately insured patients losing access to important screening

and vital preventive health care services. This case is the latest in a series of challenges to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The hearing will determine whether a popular provision in the ACA—which requires non-grandfathered group health plans and health insurance issuers to provide full coverage for preventive health care services—is constitutional. According to the statement, “Rolling back this access would reverse important progress and make it harder for physicians to diagnose and treat diseases and medical conditions that, if caught early, are significantly more manageable.” A ruling in the case is expected this summer.

More Support Is Needed to Better Address Long COVID

The Society and more than 40 other health care organizations [sent a letter](#) to leaders of the Senate Committee on Health, Education Labor and Pensions, and the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, calling for increased and improved support for those suffering from long COVID and the physicians who care for them. In the letter, the group states that providing a “national spotlight will help continue the dialogue with leading experts, ensure that progress is being made on key priorities, and identify areas for continued federal investment.” Estimates show there are approximately 8 million people in the US who experience long COVID, disproportionately from marginalized communities.

PCRC Pushes CMS to Reconsider Measure Review Process

The Physician Clinical Registry Coalition (PCRC), which includes STS, sent a [letter to CMS](#), expressing concerns about its Measure Set Review (MSR) process. The process is designed to facilitate feedback from the National Quality Forum (NQF) to CMS on quality and efficiency measures that could be considered for removal. However, PCRC argues that the MSR process—in its current form—does not provide adequate opportunity or information for stakeholders to provide meaningful feedback. The group also recommends that NQF

provide detailed summaries of the measure advisory workgroup's discussions and concerns.

Learn to Get Involved with STS Advocacy

Tomorrow, July 28, check out the live webinar—[An Inside Look at STS Advocacy: Understanding Your Impact](#)—and discover various facets of STS advocacy, what it can do for you, and how you can make a lasting impact on the cardiothoracic surgery specialty. Members will learn how they can elevate their concerns to the Society and influence the advocacy agenda. The webinar is particularly relevant to anyone planning to attend the STS Advocacy Conference in September. [Add a calendar reminder](#).



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