



The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
633 N. St. Clair, Suite 2320
Chicago, IL 60611
www.sts.org

News

STS Press Release

Media Contact:

Cassie McNulty

312-202-5865

cmcnulty@sts.org

April 15, 2015

Congress Passes Repeal of Flawed Sustainable Growth Rate Formula

Chicago – The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) applauds Congress for taking an important step in reforming the Medicare program by voting to pass the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA), which repeals the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula for Medicare physician payments.

“This significant piece of legislation supports the cardiothoracic surgery community and, more importantly, helps preserve access to care for our elderly patients,” said STS President Mark S. Allen, MD. “The outcome of last night’s vote eliminates a flawed system and moves us one step closer to replacing it with the opportunity to establish alternative payment models that rely on clinical data and reward physicians for high-quality patient care.”

The legislation includes three additional components that are especially important for cardiothoracic surgeons, including:

- Prohibiting the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) from unbundling global surgical payments;
- Allowing qualified clinical data registries to purchase Medicare claims data for quality improvement and research efforts; and
- Requiring clarification of how the Common Rule for human subjects research applies to data collection in clinical registries.

The SGR was put in place by Congress in 1997 to ensure that the yearly growth of physician payments on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries did not exceed the rate of economic growth. The concept, although well intentioned, had little chance of success, particularly because the cost containment policy was designed to govern a system that rewarded providers for the volume of services they provide rather than the quality of their care.

“STS has worked tirelessly to make sure that the decision makers were aware of the impact the flawed payment system has had on quality patient care, and we applaud Congress for passing this important, bi-partisan legislation,” said Dr. Allen. “We look forward to working with Congress and CMS on

alternative payment models that will enable all physicians to provide their patients with the best possible care.”

###

To speak with Dr. Allen contact Cassie McNulty at 312-202-5865 or cmcnulty@sts.org.

Founded in 1964, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is a not-for-profit organization representing more than 6,900 cardiothoracic surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for surgeries of the heart, lung, and esophagus, as well as other surgical procedures within the chest. The Society’s mission is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research, and advocacy.