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**TAKE ACTION:** Congress is Not Hearing Physician Payment Reform is a Priority -- We need You to Email Today

Congress has not heard from physicians that Medicare physician payment reform is a priority. Only 2.4% of DOs emailed letters to Congress last week. Your engagement with Congress in the coming weeks is imperative to end the constant struggle to reform the physician payment system, currently hindered by the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula, once and for all. If you have sent a letter in the past, please send another today.

The "SGR Repeal and Medicare Provider Payment Modernization Act" will only move to a vote by the full House and Senate if Congress hears from the entire osteopathic family. Don't allow Congress to avoid physician payment reform. Send a letter to your Members of Congress today asking them to co-sponsor the legislation and help advance the bill for a vote. We need your help during this pivotal time!

Take two minutes to send your letter today.

**Final Year for Medicare Electronic Health Record Incentive Program**

2014 is the last year eligible professionals can begin participating in the Medicare electronic health record incentive program and receive incentive payments. Eligible professionals that begin participating in the Medicare electronic health record incentive program after this year will not be able to earn an incentive payment. Those participating for the first time in 2014 must begin their 90-day reporting period no later than July 1, 2014 and submit the attestation by October 1, 2014. Eligible professionals that begin in 2014 must: demonstrate Stage 1 of meaningful use, meet 2014 EHR certification criteria, and select a 90 day reporting period to start no later than July 1 in order to avoid payment adjustment.

Medicare providers who cannot successfully demonstrate meaningful use due to circumstances beyond their control can submit applications for hardship exceptions to avoid the forthcoming payment adjustment. Under the Medicare EHR Incentive Program, payment adjustments will begin on January 1, 2015 for eligible professionals (EPs). Applications for eligible professionals are due July 1, 2014.
In an effort to assist osteopathic physicians navigate the Medicare electronic health record incentive program, the AOA has developed a variety of resources. For additional information, please contact practicemanaement@osteopathic.org.

Angela Jeansonne (ajeansonne@osteopathic.org)

**Did You Miss the Live AOA Town Hall?**

If you didn't have a chance to join your colleagues for one of the most important discussions of the year, be sure to catch up by watching the recorded version here! The Town Hall took place at the Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of California (OPSC) annual meeting, and focused on the key issues facing the profession, both challenges and opportunities, and the profession's role in an evolving health care environment. Get the answers and insight you need today!

The next AOA Town Hall will take place at the House of Delegates meeting in Chicago. Additional details will be available in the upcoming weeks.

Sean Neal (sneal@osteopathic.org)

**Medicare Part D Rule Spurs Action on Capitol Hill**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a proposed rule in early January requiring that physicians be enrolled (classified as either participating (PAR) or non-participating (non-PAR) in the Medicare program in order to prescribe drugs covered under Medicare Part D.

Earlier this month, all 24 members of the Senate Finance Committee sent a letter to CMS Administrator Marilyn Tavenner expressing concerns with the proposed rule, specifically the proposal to reduce the number of protected classes under the Medicare's Part D prescription drug benefit program.

Last week, the AOA joined over 200 companies and organizations, organized by the Healthcare Leadership Council, in sending a letter to Administrator Tavenner urging the agency to withdraw the proposed rule. On February 19, Republican leaders on House Ways and Means and Energy and Commerce, and Senate Finance Committees, sent a letter to Health and Human Services (HHS) requesting the proposed regulation be rejected, and failure to do so, will force Congress "to evaluate all legislative options necessary."

The House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee will hold a hearing next Wednesday, Feb. 26, on the proposed rule. CMS' Principal Deputy Administrator, Jonathan Blum, is scheduled to testify. The AOA is currently preparing an extensive comment letter to address our concerns on the proposed rule.

Charles Cascio (ccascio@osteopathic.org)

**Webinar: Value Based Payment Modifier - What you need to Know**

Do you know how the value-based payment modifier (VBPM) mandate for the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule will affect you and your practice?

Some physicians will be subject to the value modifier in 2015, others in 2017. Find out your specific requirements by attending the next practice management webinar on Tuesday, Feb. 25.

Webinar: Value-Based Payment Modifier Under the 2014 Physician Fee Schedule Final Rule - What You Need to Know

Date: Tuesday, Feb. 25
Time: 1:00 p.m. EST, Noon CST
Duration: One hour
Description: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) representative LeTonya Smith will provide an overview of the
final policies for the value-based payment modifier and how they apply to you.

The value-based payment modifier is a new mechanism that will be used to calculate physician payments that was included in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). For additional information on the implementation and what osteopathic physicians should know, visit the AOA’s From Act to Action - Untangling the Affordable Care Act page today.

Charles Cascio (ccascio@osteopathic.org)

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**Hill Fact: Did You Know?**

Rep. Chris Collins (R-NY) is a big fan of Lean Six Sigma, a management system he used to turn around several businesses he owned. Rep. Tom Latham (R-IA), is another promoter of that system.

Sean Neal (sneal@osteopathic.org)