

March 16, 2010

Charlene Frizzera
Acting Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
Room 445–G, Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

RE: Medicare Participation/Non-Participation Status

Dear Acting Administrator Frizzera:

We, the undersigned organizations, are writing to request that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services **extend the deadline for physicians to change their Medicare participation or non-participation status from March 17, 2010 to April 16, 2010.**

As you know, Congress recently passed legislation extending the 2009 Medicare physician conversion factor through March 31, 2010. However, unless Congress intervenes, on April 1 Medicare payments to physicians will be cut by 21.3 percent. This will drop the conversion factor to \$28.39 -- \$10 less than in 2001 and \$3 less than in 1992 – a rate which is unsustainable for most physician practices. Patients and physician practices continue to be hurt by the ongoing instability of the Medicare system, and the vicious cycle of short-term delays makes Medicare practice decisions difficult. Without some degree of certainty about Medicare payment rates, physicians simply cannot make informed decisions about their contractual relationships with the Medicare program.

Physicians are committed to serving our nation's seniors and disabled and we are working with Congress to permanently resolve the problems with the current Medicare physician payment system. In the meantime, to allow more time for Congress to complete its work and give physicians a clearer picture of what Medicare will pay them in 2010, we urge CMS to once again extend the deadline for physicians to change their Medicare participation or non-participation status.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Home Care Physicians
American Academy of Neurology Professional Association
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery

American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
American College of Osteopathic Internists
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Physicians
American College of Radiation Oncology
American College of Rheumatology
American Gastroenterological Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Medical Association
American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society
American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Rhinologic Society
American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society for Surgery of the Hand
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Spinal Injury Association
American Urological Association
Arthroscopy Association of North America
College of American Pathologists
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Heart Rhythm Society
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Medical Group Management Association
Musculoskeletal Tumor Society
North American Spine Society
Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Association
Orthopaedic Trauma Association
Renal Physicians Association
Ruth Jackson Orthopaedic Society
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Nuclear Medicine
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons