



February 7, 2013

CMS Talking Points for AMA National Advocacy Conference

The First Session of the 113th Congress only recently convened and already fiscal, immigration, firearm safety and other issues are being positioned and debated. Because this is a new Congress, the meetings with members of the Colorado congressional delegation and their staff provide an opportunity for us to advocate and to be informed. While the AMA will provide a more in-depth and up-to-the-minute briefing, we wanted to provide you with some thoughts to help each of you prepare for the congressional meetings.

Overview: Colorado Medical Society enjoys excellent relations with all members of the Colorado congressional delegation. The delegation, across-the-board, supports a permanent fix to the Medicare payment system and the SGR (sustainable growth rate) formula. The goal of each meeting is to:

1. Strengthen existing relationships by being proactive and helpful.
2. Seek a permanent fix to the Medicare payment system in the 113th Congress and to ask for immediate action to prevent a 2 percent reduction in Medicare payments scheduled for April 1.
3. Provide an update on what Colorado physicians are doing to improve access to care and quality, to bend the cost curve, and to address prescription drug abuse and firearm safety.
4. Learn what Colorado physicians can expect from the 113th Congress in terms of health policy and Medicare payment reform.

Talking Points: We are preparing a CMS folder to provide to the congressional offices consistent with the issues outlined below. We want you to be in a very proactive posture going into and during the meetings. We suggest briefly touching on each of the following.

1. **The Affordable Care Act (ACA) and health care reform:** While the AMA will counsel us on the message they would like delivered, you have a leading-edge story to tell because of the many forward-thinking health care programs and pilots already in place in Colorado while also asking for help from Congress on the Medicare payment system. Points to make:
 - CMS views the ACA as settled law, meaning that we understand that Congress acted, the courts ruled, and the voters spoke in November. CMS

and Colorado physicians are “doing our part” to make the coverage and delivery system reforms of the ACA successful.

- To make the point that Colorado physicians are “doing our part”, you can:
 - Tell a brief story about one thing that physicians are doing in your community (briefly, no long winded speeches), such as practice transformation – the movement to the PCMH (patient centered medical home), the uptake on HIT and HIE, care coordination, etc. A brief story from the local level demonstrates that we are “doing our part”.
 - Explain that Colorado’s Medicaid ACCO initiative is working. The ACCO program, strongly supported by CMS, saved the state \$30 million in its first year of operation and improved the care experience for patients.
 - Explain that CMS supports the major ACA coverage provisions delegated to the states; the Medicaid expansion and the Health Insurance Exchange. CMS is not only supporting the Medicaid expansion, “we are working with state officials to further reform the Medicaid program so patients get better care and taxpayers get more value for the premium dollar.”
 - The 2013 Spring Conference is dedicated to practice transformation.
 - Along with these stories demonstrating that Colorado physicians are “doing our part”, further explain that Congress also “needs to do its part”. The ACA was not a perfect law. Some provisions need to be amended and other important issues, like the SGR fix were not included. While our congressional delegation does not need to be persuaded that the SGR needs to be fixed; they do need to be reminded that the longer Congress delays action, the more imperiled access becomes for Medicare patients. Tell a story (briefly) to make this point. Finally, it is a fair question to ask them what we can expect from the new Congress.
 - TAKE NOTE: Unless Congress agrees on a plan to prevent the across-the-board federal budget cuts before the sequester goes into effect March 1, a 2 percent Medicare payment reduction will go into effect. The 2 percent Medicare cut is part of broader cuts required under the Budget Control Act of 2011 designed to eliminate a total of \$1.2 trillion from the federal budget over the next decade. The sequestration cuts originally were scheduled to hit Jan. 1 but were delayed two months when the American Taxpayer Relief Act became law January 3, 2013.

2. **Prescription drug abuse:** This is a national, state and local issue. Please review the media articles included with this memo and note that both the *Denver Post* and the *Washington Post*, among others, have recently run front-page stories on the issue. Be aware that a report just released in January cited widely

in the news media revealed that Colorado has the second-highest rate of prescription drug abuse in the nation. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration shows that 6 percent of Coloradans ages 12 and older report having abused prescription pain relievers in the past year compared to a national average of 4.57 percent. The highest rate of abuse occurs in the young adult population; 14 percent of Coloradans between the ages of 18 and 25 reported misuse of the drugs in 2010-2011 compared to 10.43 percent nationally. As prescribers of these medications, physicians play a central role in this issue. Points to make:

- We are keenly aware of and concerned about America's prescription drug abuse crisis. Addressing the issue is a high priority for CMS. The Board of Directors has directed the society to work proactively with the governor, his staff, and appropriate state agencies and stakeholders on effective strategies to reduce prescription drug abuse in Colorado.
- Governor Hickenlooper is co-chair of a seven state National Governor's Association project to get the crisis under control. CMS has convened a special task force on the issue to help the Governor and to advise CMS.
- Make the point that any public policy response to the crisis should significantly reduce the potential for diversion to recreational or medically inappropriate use and risk of overdose, while assuring compassionate, evidence-based care for patients who suffer from chronic non-cancer pain.

3. **Firearm Safety:** Proposals to regulate firearms is being hotly debated in Congress, as we are sure you know. Because Colorado has been disproportionately impacted by firearm violence, we suggest that the following points be made in the meetings.

- CMS is supporting Governor Hickenlooper's proposal to strengthen Colorado's mental health system in response to firearm violence and will be considering support of other measures in the near future.
- Component societies, like DMS, are having thoughtful discussions about the role of physicians in this debate and are reaching out to elected officials at the state level.
- CMS is currently surveying its membership on the details of firearm safety proposals. In the packet, we'll include the CMS media release, a DMS letter to Governor Hickenlooper (both included with this memo) and an initial cut of the survey data.