This Week in Health Policy…
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SGR Update

• On Monday March 1\textsuperscript{st} 2010, all doctors who see Medicare patients will face a 21\% cut in reimbursement. In response to this emergency, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is instructing their contractors to hold Medicare physician claims for 10 business days, effective Monday.

• The U.S. Senate will attempt to fix this problem by including a 7-month sustainable growth rate (SGR) extension in a Tax Extenders bill they will consider on Monday afternoon \textcolor{blue}{(Tax Extenders bill)}. This is the same extension that was stripped from the Senate jobs bill that passed earlier this week.

\textbf{NMA insists that the Senate repeal the SGR in a manner similar to the approach taken by the House of Representatives. Call your Senator and ask them to repeal the SGR - it is time to put an end to short-term patches.}

\textit{For contact information for your Senator click here.}
President Obama put forward a health reform proposal on February 22\textsuperscript{nd} that draws from both the Senate and House health reform bills as well as additions from Republican members of Congress. Generally, the President's Proposal follows the Senate bill with some departures including but not limited to:

- Eliminating the Nebraska FMAP provision and providing additional Federal financing to all States for the expansion of Medicaid;
- Closing the Medicare prescription drug ‘donut hole’ coverage gap;
- Strengthening the provisions to fight fraud, waste, and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid;
- Increasing the threshold for the excise tax on the most expensive health plans from $23,000 for a family plan to $27,500 and starting it in 2018 for all plans;
- In response to Anthem Blue Cross premium hikes and other like it around the nation, President Obama proposes creating a new Health Insurance Rate Authority to provide Federal assistance and oversight to States in conducting reviews of unreasonable rate increases and other unfair practices of insurance plans.

To Read the full text of the President’s proposal and its summary documents, visit the White House website:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/health-care-meeting/proposal
The National Medical Association, along with the National Hispanic Medical Association and the National Council of Asian and Pacific Islander Physicians, sent a letter to Congressional Leaders in advance of Thursday’s White House summit on health insurance reform. The letter urges Congress to deal with the challenges facing the health care system by passing health insurance reform legislation.

To read the joint letter click here.
Health Insurance Reform Summit

On Thursday, Democratic and Republican Congressional leaders participated in the President’s Summit on health insurance reform. The discussion centered on four critical topics: insurance reforms, cost containment, expanding coverage, and deficit reduction.

You can learn more about the meeting by visiting the White House website at: www.whitehouse.gov/health-care-meeting/bipartisan-meeting

Read remarks: http://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-and-remarks

Read the White House blog posts on the bipartisan meeting.

Highlights from the Summit

• Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D‐Nev.) cited a study showing that 45,000 Americans die every year because they lack health insurance. Furthermore, 70 percent of the 750,000 bankruptcies recorded in 2008 stemmed from health care costs, even though 80 percent of those people had insurance coverage.

• Senator Tom Coburn (R‐Okla.), one of two medical doctors in the Senate, detailed Republican prescriptions for reducing health‐care costs by eliminating fraud and restricting malpractice lawsuits. Senator Coburn also put forward the idea of ‘undercover patients’ to help weed out fraud, waste, and abuse in Medicare and Medicaid.

• HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius explained that given the monopolies in the health insurance market, health reform is more critical now than ever. (On Wednesday the House passed H.R. 4626, the Health Insurance Industry Fair Competition Act, a bill that would repeal the antitrust exemption given to health insurance companies.)

• The President and Democratic leaders were emphatic about the need for people in the individual and small group market to be part of a large risk pool, so that premiums become more affordable.

• At the end of the six hour summit, President Obama laid out some areas of consensus between the Democrats and Republicans, however many disagreements remain.
What You Can Do

• Now that the President’s health insurance reform summit has wrapped up, call your Member of Congress and urge them to move forward and reform the health care system.

✓ Find contact information for your member of Congress: click here.

✓ Share your feedback with the NMA Health Policy Team. Contact us at healthpolicy@nmanet.org.

• Share Policy Beat with your friends and colleagues.

• Continue to visit our Haiti Earthquake Relief page for information on relief efforts.

For the latest health policy news and information visit our page NMA Health Policy Updates.
Work Cited


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