This Week in Health Policy...

- Medicare 2012 – SGR Calls For 27.4% Cut
- Medicaid Budgets – Shorter Hospital Stays
- Health IT – National Learning Consortium
- FDA and NIH Team Up to Study Smokers
This week, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued their final rule for the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) for 2012. MPFS is largely driven by the SGR, which calls for a 27.4% pay cut in 2012 for doctors who serve Medicare, absent Congressional intervention! CMS will entertain public comment from late November 2011 to late January 2012. More details are available here.

**Highlights:**

- **27.4% instead of 29.5% cut**
- More Health Risk Assessments (HRA) in 2012
- CMS implementing IOM recommendations
The expiration of federal funds made available to the states via the Recovery Act of 2009 (aka the ‘stimulus’) has resulted in a contraction in Medicaid revenues for the states. Consequently, some states have decided to favor shorter hospital stays for Medicaid beneficiaries. Given the heavy chronic disease burden in the Medicaid population, many of whom are people of color, the National Medical Association remains very concerned about the access and quality implications of these decisions.

More details are available here.
The Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT (ONC) has developed a **National Learning Consortium (NLC)** to disseminate best practices in EHR Adoption. The goal is to help eligible providers learn from what has worked in ONC’s outreach to the health care community throughout the build-up toward *meaningful use*. Details of the NLC are available [here](#).

Photo credit: Alabama Medicaid Agency
This week, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) signaled plans to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in a multimedia campaign to reduce tobacco use among vulnerable populations. Last month, FDA and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced a massive collaboration to study 40,000 users of tobacco products over time, in an effort to assess the effectiveness of the Tobacco Control Act of 2009. More details here.

Key Points:

- Tobacco use is the nation’s leading cause of preventable disease
- 70 million Americans over the age of 12 used tobacco in 2010
- Cigarette smoking results in 443,000 premature deaths annually
- Smoking rates in the U.S. have dropped dramatically since 1970
What You Can Do

• Please call your Members of Congress, and urge them to preserve funding for Medicare and Medicaid. Contact info here.

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