

Advocacy Updates: Blunting Medicare Payment Cuts and Addressing Physician Wellness

Medicare Reimbursement Cuts

Hospitalists and other clinicians who bill Medicare faced an approximate 10% payment cut to their Medicare reimbursement starting on January 1, 2022. These cuts, which would have coincided with the financial challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, were the result of multiple compounding factors, including the expiration of the reprieve from the 2 percent sequester, the expiration of the 2021 Congressionally enacted 3.75 percent increase to the Medicare physician fee schedule that offset budget neutrality cuts, and across-the-board cuts to curtail spending increases.

Throughout 2021, SHM and our hospitalist advocates across the country have been working to avert these cuts and our efforts have paid off. On December 9th, the Senate passed, and on the 10th, President Biden signed into law the Protecting Medicare and American Farmers from Sequester Cuts Act. This legislation places a moratorium on the 2 percent sequester cut through the end of March, at which point a 1% cut would go into effect through the end of June. This bill also includes an across-the-board 3% positive payment adjustment to Medicare provider reimbursement. Furthermore, this bill would delay the 4% PAYGO cut until 2023. Taken together, this bill blunted most of the scheduled cuts.

Combatting Physician Suicide

As the legislative vehicle to pass the Medicare payment fixes, Congress also passed the [Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act](#). This legislation begins to address a rapidly expanding issue of burnout among healthcare professionals. It establishes grants that support training strategies to reduce and prevent suicide, burnout, behavioral health conditions, and substance use disorders among healthcare professionals. Furthermore, this legislation provides funding for programs to educate and promote mental and behavioral health in the healthcare workforce.

Passing this important legislation represents an important first step in addressing the crisis of physician suicide and burnout. SHM remains committed to supporting hospitalists and their mental health and well-being. SHM will continue to provide resources and remained involved in advocacy efforts to support physician wellbeing and their mental health.

For more information:

- [SHM Well-being resources](#)
- [SHM Supports Establishing National Physician Suicide Awareness Day](#)