
 **AAFP News: AFP Edition***Policy and Health Issues in the News***AAFP Expresses Disappointment with Final 2017 Medicare Fee Schedule**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently released the final 2017 Medicare physician fee schedule, prompting the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) to express disappointment with provisions that fall short of expectations. AAFP President John Meigs, MD, singled out CMS' handling of misvalued code changes that achieved only 0.32% in net expenditure reductions. That action, he noted, means physicians will not get the anticipated payment increase called for by the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA). New requirements that physicians will have to meet to comply with appropriate use criteria for advanced diagnostic imaging is another area that drew Meig's attention. "The AAFP has ongoing significant concerns about the disproportional burden primary care physicians will face when trying to comply with appropriate use criteria requirements," said Meigs. "We believe these requirements will place more burdens on primary care physicians than on other providers and add an unnecessary level of complexity that severely overtaxes our members." For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/government-medicine/20161104finalmpfs.html>.

Campaign Seeks to Educate Opioid Prescribers

The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids recently announced the national launch of its Search and Rescue campaign, which is intended to educate prescribers of opioid medications on how to prevent misuse and abuse of these drugs in their offices and to provide them with resources on responsible prescribing practices. Developed with the support of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the campaign aims to help physicians proactively identify and help patients who are at risk of opioid abuse. On the Search and Rescue website's opioid abuse resources page (<http://www.searchandrescueusa.org/opioid-abuse-resources/>), family physicians can view brief educational videos and connect with a range of tools and resources, including a fact sheet for prescribers, an opioid risk tool, and an FDA database of approved risk evaluation and mitigation strategies for opioid medications and other drugs. Videos are also available on topics such as identifying prescription drug abuse and managing patients who are suspected of misusing opioid prescriptions. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/health-of-the-public/20161013searchrescue.html>.

AAFP Guides Social Security Administration in Revising Disability Evidence Rules

The AAFP recently gave the Social Security Administration (SSA) pointed feedback as the agency considers new rules for medical evidence in disability and blindness claims, including who can serve as medical and psychological consultants. In a recent letter, AAFP Board Chair Wanda Filer, MD, MBA, raised concern about the SSA's desire "to make every reasonable effort" to seek input from a psychologist or a psychiatrist when determining whether an applicant has a mental health disability that qualifies for benefit coverage. "Due to the shortage of psychiatrists and psychologists and as more individuals seek mental health care, the demand for this care will outweigh the supply of psychiatrists or qualified psychologists," Filer wrote. She also cited an earlier letter to CMS calling for a massive educational campaign on the importance of selecting a primary care physician to coordinate care. She said such a campaign would address the fragmentation of health care that undermines the concept of a patient-centered medical home, and it would help the SSA collect the medical evidence needed to process claims. The SSA's proposed rule acknowledged that the changing nature of primary care means the agency should begin evaluating an individual's medical history based on the persuasiveness of medical opinions and previous administrative findings instead of assigning specific weight to each piece of these data. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/government-medicine/20161026ssaevideance.html>.

National STI Prevalence Hits All-Time High

For the second consecutive year, numbers of newly diagnosed cases of all three nationally reportable sexually transmitted infections (STIs)—syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia—have risen, topping out at an unprecedented combined high. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 1.5 million new cases of chlamydia were reported last year, the highest number of annual cases of any condition ever recorded. Young adults bear a disproportionate share of STIs, with about one-half of the estimated 20 million new cases occurring in persons 15 to 24 years of age. For more information, go to <http://www.aafp.org/news/health-of-the-public/20161026stdreport.html>.

— AFP AND AAFP NEWS STAFF

For more news, visit AAFP News at <http://www.aafp.org/news.html>. ■