



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Press Releases

[News from the American College of Surgeons >](#)

MEDIA ADVISORY
February 16, 2012

Contact:
American Academy of Family Physicians
Leslie Champlin
(800) 274-2237, ext. 5224
lchampli@aafp.org

American College of Physicians
Jacquelyn Blaser
(202) 261-4572
jblaser@acponline.org

American College of Surgeons
Sally Garneski
(312) 202-5409
pressinquiry@facs.org

Agreement on Short-term SGR “Patch” Fails to Ensure Access to Care or Advance Needed Reforms

Joint Statement of the

American Academy of Family Physicians
American College of Physicians
American College of Surgeons
American Osteopathic Association

Our organizations, representing more than 500,000 physicians and medical student members, are deeply disappointed by the agreement in Congress to enact another short-term “patch” that neither solves, nor moves us closer to solving, the Medicare physician payment crisis. We are especially frustrated because Congress has had a short-lived window of opportunity to eliminate the Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula, once and for all, using unspent monies for overseas military operations.

On January 31, the physician leaders of our organizations came to Washington to urge the Senate and House leadership and conference committee members to reallocate Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funds (which the Pentagon says will never be spent) to permanently repeal the SGR. We pointed out this would enable Congress to eliminate *all* of the accumulated and future scheduled payment cuts created by the SGR, while producing a more accurate and fiscally responsible budget. Use of unspent OCO funds to repeal the SGR has almost universal support from organizations representing physicians, hospitals, and seniors.

Yet despite our efforts—and the valiant efforts by some members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, to persuade their colleagues to reallocate the OCO funds to repeal the SGR—the agreement will end up with Congress doing what it has done repeatedly: putting off repeal and permanent reform until another day.

Like all of the many other short-term patches that Congress has enacted over the past nine years, the agreement fails to provide the stability in Medicare payments needed to ensure patient access to care and to advance comprehensive payment reform. After this latest 10 month extension expires, the next cut will be steeper—an estimated 32 percent cut on January 1, 2013. As a result, the threat to access will be greater, the budget price tag to eliminate the cut will be even higher, and the barriers to comprehensive payment reform will be even steeper.

Real payment reform can't advance as long as physicians and their patients are facing the instability created by more double-digit SGR cuts just 10 months from now. Our organizations are committed to helping Congress develop better ways to pay physicians and deliver care to patients, but Congress must do its part and enact permanent repeal of the SGR—*before 2012 comes to a close*.

About the American Academy of Family Physicians

Founded in 1947, the AAFP represents 100,300 physicians and medical students nationwide. It is the only medical society devoted solely to primary care. Approximately one in four of all office visits are made to family physicians. That is 228 million office visits each year — nearly 84 million more than the next largest medical specialty. Today, family physicians provide more care for America's underserved and rural populations than any other medical specialty. Family medicine's cornerstone is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care.

About the American College of Physicians

The American College of Physicians (www.acponline.org) is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 132,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internists specialize in the prevention, detection, and treatment of illness in adults. Follow ACP on Twitter (www.twitter.com/acpinternists) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/acpinternists).

About the American College of Surgeons

The American College of Surgeons is a scientific and educational organization of surgeons that was founded in 1913 to raise the standards of surgical practice and to improve the care of the surgical patient. The College is dedicated to the ethical and competent practice of surgery. Its achievements have significantly influenced the course of scientific surgery in America and have established it as an important advocate for all surgical patients. The College has more than 78,000 members and is the largest organization of surgeons in the world. For more information, visit www.facs.org.

About the American Osteopathic Association

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) proudly represents its professional family of more than 78,000 osteopathic physicians (DOs); promotes public health; encourages scientific research; serves as the primary certifying body for DOs; is the accrediting agency for osteopathic medical schools; and has federal authority to accredit hospitals and other health care facilities. More information on DOs/osteopathic medicine can be found at www.osteopathic.org.

#
