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LEGISLATION RE-INTRODUCED BY SENATE AND HOUSE OFFERS COMMON SENSE
APPROACH TO
LOWERING MEDICARE SPENDING WHILE IMPROVING
QUALITY OF CARE TO PATIENTS

Coverage of Home-Based Infusion Therapy Currently Denied Would Provide Immediate Financial Relief to Medicare Program

Washington, DC – The National Home Infusion Association (NHIA) today applauded Senators Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and John Kerry (D-MA) and Representatives Eliot Engel (D-NY-17) and Tim Murphy (R-PA-18) for their bi-partisan leadership in re-introducing legislation to provide Medicare beneficiaries with access to infusion therapy in their homes. This bill would contribute toward the long-term solvency of Medicare while providing older and disabled Americans on Medicare with access to safe, high-quality, cost-effective home infusion therapy denied to them under the current program. Today, Medicare beneficiaries are forced to undergo unnecessary, costly extended stays in hospitals and nursing homes to receive treatment, which in many cases can be provided in the home.

The *Medicare Home Infusion Therapy Coverage Act of 2011*, introduced concurrently in the Senate (S.1203) and in the House (H.R. 2195) would close a gap that currently exists in coverage where the medications used in infusions to treat serious diseases are covered, but not the medical services, supplies or equipment needed to deliver the home therapy. The proposed legislation calls for coverage of infusion-related services, supplies, and equipment under Medicare Part B, while coverage of the drugs would remain under Medicare Part D.

Home infusion therapy has been covered by private insurers for decades including many State Medicaid programs, Medicare Advantage, the Veteran's Administration, Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan. Medicare is the only major payor that does not cover all the essential components of home infusion therapy.

“This cost-saving legislation will minimize unnecessary institutional treatment while improving the quality of health care for our seniors,” said Senator Snowe. “Infusion therapy is a safe and effective alternative to institutional care that allows seniors to receive appropriate medical treatments in the comfort of their own homes. I am pleased to reintroduce this measure with Senator Kerry and look forward to the Senate’s consideration of this common-sense legislation as we work to ensure the long-term viability and quality of Medicare benefits for our senior citizens.”

“It's wrong and stupid to drag senior citizens out of their homes for medical care when they can get safer, more cost-effective infusion therapy right at home. Olympia Snowe and I serve on the Finance Committee which can get results and we're going to work with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass this important legislation.” said Senator Kerry.

“Through this common sense legislation we hope to correct the unintended and unnecessary gap in Medicare coverage,” said Representative Engel. “Patients needing infusion therapy should be allowed to get treatment in the safety and comfort of their own homes where they are not at risk of secondary infections,” he added.

“Even though private health plans have been covering home infusion therapy for decades, Medicare still forces patients to enter a hospital for treatment where it costs Medicare thousands of dollars versus only hundreds within the home. Entering a hospital for infusion therapy is also less convenient for the patient who is then needlessly exposed to more health risks. There is a better way, and by passing this bill we can save taxpayers money and improve the quality of life of Medicare beneficiaries.” said Representative Murphy.

“NHIA commends these Senators and Congressmen for their commitment to improving the quality of care for home-based patients needing intravenous treatments,” said Mary Cope, President and CEO, HomeChoice Partners, Inc, and NHIA Board Chair. “With reports that the Medicare fund for hospital care will be depleted in 2017, our country can no longer afford to waste precious healthcare dollars,” she added.

“The re-introduction of the *Medicare Home Infusion Therapy Coverage Act of 2011* offers a common sense solution to improving patient care, while providing much needed relief to the Medicare crisis,” said NHIA President and CEO Russell Bodoff. “We urge Congress to fully consider a 2010 General Accountability Office (GAO) study which clearly demonstrated that home infusion therapy provides costs savings and quality patient care, with no unusual utilization. With the increasingly urgent need to reduce Medicare spending, this legislation and the GAO study findings represent an ideal opportunity for Congress to help find vital Medicare savings, while providing exceptionally high-quality patient care,” he added.

Infusion therapy involves the administration of medication through a needle or catheter, and is prescribed for infections unresponsive to oral antibiotics, cancer-related pain, dehydration, gastrointestinal disorders, congestive heart failure, Crohn's Disease, hemophilia, immune deficiencies, multiple sclerosis, and rheumatoid arthritis, among many other conditions.

The *Medicare Home Infusion Therapy Coverage Act of 2011* is co-sponsored by Senators Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Daniel Inouye (D-HI) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and in the House by Representative Tammy Baldwin, (D-WI-2). The Senate bill was referred to the Finance Committee, and the House bill has been referred to the House Committee on Energy & Commerce and the House Committee on Ways & Means.

The National Home Infusion Association, based in Alexandria, Virginia, is a trade association that represents and advances the interests of organizations that provide infusion and specialized pharmacy products and services to the entire spectrum of home-based patients. For more information, visit the association at www.nhia.org

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