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PROSTATE CANCER GROUPS DEMAND DOCTORS AND PATIENTS GIVEN CONTROL OVER PATIENTS' PROSTATE CANCER TREATMENT

Impact of Bundling Arrangements Strikingly Similar to Least Costly Alternative Policies in Distorting Financial Incentives and Compromising Patient Care

WASHINGTON, D.C., October 27, 2006 – Citing treatment considerations over financial control mechanisms, a coalition of groups representing prostate cancer patients issued a call this week for Medicare to drop its policy of least costly alternative (LCA) for prostate cancer patients.

The LCA policy encourages providers to give patients the treatment that costs the least where treatments are deemed by the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) as interchangeable.

At a recent Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) meeting, the commission considered changes to the average sales price (ASP) system because bundled discount arrangements by companies can have a warping effect on Medicare reimbursement rates for physicians, potentially driving them to make decisions that are not based on clinical factors. For these same reasons, the coalition seeks to have MedPAC also consider changes to the LCA policy. Both practices clearly alter market behavior.

In a joint letter to MedPAC, the coalition of groups, which includes the Men's Health Network, the National Prostate Cancer Coalition, the Prostate Health Education Network, Inc., and Us TOO laid out their concerns over the impact of LCA on the lives and treatment of men with prostate cancer. Among them:

- Physician judgment is supplanted by cost factors
- The cost of therapy from quarter to quarter could cause sudden changes in treatment based on cost, not efficacy
- By shifting the difference in cost of the LCA treatment with more expensive treatments to the patient, the policy discourages patients from seeking the most appropriate treatment

“LCA policies for prostate cancer drugs are inappropriate because they substitute Medicare’s determination that certain drugs are interchangeable for the physician’s professional judgment that one drug may be more efficacious or have fewer side effects for a particular patient,” said the letter.

“All things being equal, cheaper is of course always perceived as better,” said Scott Williams Director, Professional Relations & Public Policy - Men’s Health Network. “But all things are not equal. This is treatment for cancer and the impact of the LCA means that the treatment you get is not based on what is best for you, but what is cheapest. That simply isn’t fair to the patient who is fighting for his life. It is past time for CMS to review and remove policies that threaten rather than support patients.”

About Men's Health Network

Men's Health Network (MHN) is a non-profit educational organization comprised of physicians, researchers, public health workers, and individuals. MHN is committed to improving the health and wellness of men, boys, and their families through education campaigns, screenings, data collection, surveys, toll-free hotlines, and work with health care providers. With a network of chapters, affiliates, and health partners, MHN has a presence in every state. MHN conducts screenings in the workplace and at public venues, sponsors conferences, and promotes awareness periods such as National Men's Health Week. MHN partners with both private and public entities to achieve these goals.

About National Prostate Cancer Coalition

The National Prostate Cancer Coalition (NPCC) sets the standard for rapidly reducing the burden of prostate cancer on American men and their families through awareness, outreach, and advocacy. NPCC aims to educate every American about the risk of prostate cancer, the importance of early detection and the research funding needed to beat the disease. The National Prostate Cancer Coalition manages the only national mobile prostate cancer screening clinic. NPCC actively works with government officials to increase federal funding for prostate cancer research.

About Prostate Health Education Network

PHEN's primary mission is to increase prostate health education and awareness among the men at highest risk for prostate cancer in the United States, African Americans. Saving lives through early detection and eliminating the African American prostate cancer disparity is PHEN's education and awareness goal. PHEN's mission also includes efforts to increase the overall support and resources to wage a war on prostate cancer that will eventually lead to a cure for the disease.

About Us TOO Prostate Cancer Education & Support

Us TOO is a grassroots organization started in 1990 by prostate cancer survivors to serve prostate cancer survivors, their spouses/partners and families. We are a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to communicating timely and reliable information enabling informed choices regarding detection and treatment of prostate cancer. Ultimately, Us TOO strives to enhance the quality of life for all those affected by prostate cancer. In addition to providing education and support programs, Us TOO is an active advocate for patients. We are committed to making sure patients have access to the programs, medications, treatments and health care professionals they need for the best possible outcomes.

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