

## **Medicare proposes cuts in hospice reimbursement**

**Category : Health Care**

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Medicare services has proposed cuts in the reimbursement that hospices receive for the provision of care.

In a time when health care reimbursement has already been cut to the bone, Medicare (CMS) has turned it's eye toward hospice providers. Throughout health care provider organizations, reimbursement has already been cut as deeply as it can be without sacrificing the quality of what that the very same organization has demanded more of: quality. At every turn, the demands made upon providers ask for more forms, greater attention payed to patients, greater documentation, all the while proposing greater and greater cuts.

At this moment, CMS appears to have placed hospice providers in it's cross-hairs. As has been the case with almost all other providers, hospice continues to face increasing demands for more documentation, more benefits to patients and greater accountability. But, with the level of reimbursement seemingly headed for decline, hospices will have to find ways to stay afloat with less funds. Let's see: What are their options? Fewer staff, fewer patient benefits, more patients needing to be hospitalized because hospices can't care for patients at home with decreased staff availability. In short, patient care will suffer and fewer people will feel comfortable choosing hospice care.

And, what is the next care in the Rolodex file? It is this: People will not choose hospice because of perceived lack of care. Ergo, more people will choose to take more aggressive options in their care of loved ones, increasing what we all pay to provide aggressive treatment at the end of life when it is often both futile and unethical. Untold dollars have been saved in end-of-life care because hospice gave a way for patients to live out their lives comfortably, often at home, and economically responsibly. Under the new proposal, people will more likely die in the hospital, receiving care they would not want, and running up a bill for futile care that disrespects many of their wishes.

There are only so many dollars to go around. Hospice is an option that respects all the parties involved: Patient, family, provider, and governmental resources. With only so many dollars to go around, it is imperative that we keep this financially sound resource strong and viable.

Please write or call the White House and your representative/senator today. Likely there will come a time when you need hospice. We did just a month ago for my Dad. I'm glad that [Hospice of Chattanooga](#) was there for him. I fear that they may not be *able* to be there for your loved one - not if CMS has their way.

For more about the proposed rate cuts visit the following pages:

[Health Care Finance News](#)

[National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization \(NHPCO\)](#)

To see the press release from NHPCO, go to the next page:

Wage Index Release

For Immediate Release:

April 29, 2008

NHPCO Responds to Medicare