



TMA STATEMENT — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 27, 2010

Medicare Meltdown Two Days Away

The following can be attributed to William H. Fleming III, MD, president of the Texas Medical Association. Dr. Fleming's statement discusses how the Medicare physician payment cuts on March 1, 2010 could force physicians out of the program.

“It’s appalling that Congress turned it backs to elderly patients, people with disabilities and military families – all who are dependent upon Medicare.

“Congress’ failure to pass a measure to stop the cut to physician’s Medicare payments will affect more than 2.5 million senior citizens and people with disabilities, and 850,000 military family members in Texas who depend on Medicare for health care.

“On Monday, March 1, the 21.2-percent cut goes into effect. A cut this huge will force doctors to make a terrible choice, just to keep their practices open. A survey says, 43 percent of Texas physicians currently treating Medicare patients said the cuts would force them out of Medicare all together. Another 37 percent said the cuts would cause them to limit the number of new Medicare patients they treat. Physicians don't want to quit taking care of their elderly patients. It's the last thing we want to do.

“For the past year, Congress has worked to pass a health care bill. In the midst of all the rhetoric, Medicare — the largest health program run by the government — is imploding. The government simply cannot run a health care program without physicians to care for the patients Medicare covers. How can any of us trust Congress truly to address health care concerns if Congress cannot and will not fix Medicare?

“Medicare patients and their physicians need a fair and rational Medicare physician payment system that automatically keeps up with the cost of running a practice and is backed by a fair, stable funding formula.”

TMA is the largest state medical society in the nation, representing nearly 45,000 physician and medical student members. It is located in Austin and has 120 component county medical societies around the state. TMA’s key objective since 1853 is to improve the health of all Texans.

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