



## **TMA STATEMENT — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Feb. 24, 2010

### **Countdown to Medicare Meltdown: Day 5**

*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 slated for March 1, 2010 will affect patients.*

“For an elderly patient, a doctor can mean everything: independence, hope, and security. Medicare makes it possible. For a physician, treating our elderly patients is everything. We have cared for many of these patients for years. We know their children and their grandchildren — these patients are family. The last thing we want to do is tell our elderly patients that we can no longer care for them. However, in just five days we may have no choice. On March 1, Medicare will cut physician payments by 21-2 percent.

Physicians have been operating under government price controls since 1987. Believe it or not, we have not had a payment increase from Medicare that kept up with cost of running a practice since 2001. If Congress does not fix Medicare, almost half of Texas physicians will be forced out of Medicare. This is horrible for senior citizens, for Texans with disabilities, and for families in the military who depend on Medicare for health care. We need a 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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