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April 27, 2016

Dear Senators and Representatives:

On March 8, 2016, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) proposed a rule that would implement a new “Medicare Part B Payment Model” that could seriously impair the ability of cancer care providers to effectively treat and care for patients. We believe that this type of initiative, implemented without sufficient stakeholder input, will adversely affect the care and treatment of Colorado Medicare patients with complex conditions such as cancer. We previously sent a letter to Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Sylvia Burwell asking the Secretary not to move forward with this type of initiative, and we now respectfully request that you ask CMS to withdraw the proposed rule.

Patients suffering from cancer rely on a specific treatment regimen that addresses the individual complexities of their disease. Physicians weigh many factors in determining how best to treat each individual. It is not uncommon to try multiple treatments and make incremental changes to our approach in order to identify the medicine or combination of medicines that best address the needs of patients. Options and flexibility are critical tools that enable us to tailor treatments and improve patients’ lives.

Unfortunately, the proposed rule fails to take into account the complexities of patient care and instead makes recommendations that are focused solely on costs. As a result, the proposed rule would restrict access to medications and hinder our ability to identify the treatments best suited to each individual’s needs. Additionally, the proposal could require changes to patients’ current treatment plans and disrupt effective approaches to care. For patients with cancer, disruptions to care are incredibly dangerous and could seriously impact their quality of life.

We urge you to ensure that Colorado’s oldest and sickest patients continue to be able to access their most appropriate cancer drugs and services. We therefore request that you ask CMS to withdraw the Part B Drug Payment Model from consideration.

Sincerely,

Allen L. Cohn, MD
President