



NEWS

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Nurses rally on Capitol Hill to protect home health care

WASHINGTON D.C. (July 27, 2011) – Home health nurses from 12 states gathered in D.C. today, to be the voice of the thousands of patients served by the home care community across the US who would be directly affected by proposed cuts in Medicare/Medicaid.

Home health nurses are on the front lines everyday and provide compassionate care to some of America's sickest patients inside their homes. They took time out of their busy schedules to come to the nation's capitol and share their patient's stories with lawmakers.

Marion Smayda, a nurse with Visiting Nurse Association Health Group in Red Bank, New Jersey, told of a husband who had provided care for his MS stricken wife for years when he found himself in need of home care services. "Had the co-pay provision been in place I don't think this family could have afforded the level of care they needed."

Convened by the National Association for Home Care & Hospice on the 46th anniversary of Medicare, nurses from Arkansas, California, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Michigan, North Carolina, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island are a part of the two-day visit to Capitol Hill in which they will be meeting with policymakers working to reach a final debt ceiling agreement and sharing their serious concerns over proposed funding cuts to Medicare and Medicaid funded services in their communities. These 12 states represent more than 50% of US healthcare expenditures alone.

"My friend and patient, Mrs. Lois Daly, a retired nurse, would have not been able to return home after a long illness had there been a co-pay with her Medicare benefits," said Lucy Andrews, ceo of At Your Service Home Care of Santa Rosa, California.

Home health co-pays would disproportionately impact poor and sick seniors, shift seniors to more costly settings and increase Medicare and Medicaid costs. Co-pays were repealed in 1972 and remain unpopular today. Home health agencies cannot tolerate any further cuts and co-payments that, if implemented, would have adverse effects on patients. The result would be Medicare having to pay for more expensive levels of care, such as hospitals and nursing homes stays.

"Cost-effective home health and hospice services save money in the long run and should be encouraged, not cut, as a way to reduce the deficit," said Val J. Halamandaris, president of NAHC. "Home health and hospice already took disproportionate cuts in the health care reform legislation and should not be cut again."

Over the next few years, \$12 billion in Medicare cuts to the industry are already planned even though home care and hospice is more cost effective, saving billions in Medicare expenditures. In 2009, the average home care visit cost \$135 per day versus the average hospital visit which cost \$1,800 a day. Preventive home health care saves Medicare and Medicaid billions of dollars per year.

ABOUT NAHC

The National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC) is a nonprofit organization that represents the nation's 33,000 home care and hospice organizations. NAHC also advocates for the more than two million nurses, therapists, aides and other caregivers employed by such organizations to provide in-home services each year to some 10 million Americans who are infirm, chronically ill, disabled and dying. Along with its advocacy, NAHC is committed to excellence in every respect and provides information to help its members maintain the highest quality of care. To learn more about NAHC, visit www.nahc.org.