



A PATIENT-CENTERED FORUM OF NATIONAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESSING PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IN CANCER

June 8, 2000

The Honorable Donna E. Shalala
Secretary, Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Ave., S.W.
Room 615-F - HHH Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Madame Secretary:

As representatives of people with cancer, we are dismayed by your recent actions to reduce Medicare payments for drugs administered by a physician, which are largely drugs to treat cancer. Medicare beneficiaries are disproportionately struck by cancer, and any federal government policy that hinders beneficiary access to quality cancer care is of concern to us all.

Delivering anticancer chemotherapy in a physician's office entails costs beyond those of the drugs themselves. Moreover, it is well recognized, even by your own Department, that oncologists are not adequately paid for the professional services involved in administering chemotherapy. Further reductions will jeopardize the ability of office-based oncologists to continue to provide quality care in the relatively convenient and supportive private office setting. Cancer patients do not want to be forced back into the hospital outpatient department because Medicare reimbursement policies make treatment in the physician office fiscally impracticable.

This is an issue that Congress has previously considered and resolved. Efforts by your Department to revive the controversy administratively seem inconsistent with the will of Congress. We certainly believe this initiative is inconsistent with quality cancer care, and we urge you in the strongest possible terms to reconsider this ill-advised action.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

Alliance for Lung Cancer Advocacy, Support, and Education
American Cancer Society
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology & Oncology, Inc.
Cancer Care, Inc.
Cancer Research Foundation of America
The Children's Cause, Inc.
Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups
Colorectal Cancer Network
Cure For Lymphoma Foundation
Kidney Cancer Association
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Prostate Cancer Coalition
North American Brain Tumor Coalition
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation
US-TOO International, Inc.
Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization

cc:

President Clinton
Vice President Gore
The Honorable Bill Archer
The Honorable Michael Bilirakis
The Honorable Thomas Bliley, Jr.
The Honorable Bill Thomas