



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

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September 6, 2001

Dear Representative:

The undersigned represent cancer patients and survivors, health care providers and research institutions who enthusiastically support H.R. 1624, the bipartisan bill to extend Medicare coverage to all oral anti-cancer drugs under Part B. Approximately one half of the Members of the House of Representatives have signed on as co-sponsors of this important legislation. If you are among the co-sponsors, we would like to express our sincere appreciation and encourage your continued support. If you have not yet joined your colleagues as co-sponsors of the bill developed by Representatives Pryce, Bentsen, Capps and Myrick, then we strongly urge you to do so.

You are probably aware that this year has witnessed a substantial milestone in the fight against cancer. A new oral drug was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in record time for the treatment of a rare but deadly form of blood cancer. By targeting a specific genetic defect that results in the cancer, this drug demonstrated much greater efficacy than existing chemotherapy regimens and caused almost no side effects. The significance of this achievement lies not merely in the treatment of this particular cancer, but in the demonstration that such targeted therapies can offer an effective and potentially cost-effective alternative to the toxicities associated with traditional chemotherapy. And there is reason to hope that this drug will be the first of many less toxic and more effective targeted oral drugs.

Medicare already covers the cost of most cancer drug therapy because the drugs are administered through injections by providers. Since 1993, oral anti-cancer drugs have been covered under Part B, but only if they are available in both oral and injectable form. This limitation means that many of the new oral drugs will not be accessible to Medicare beneficiaries.

The current coverage of some oral anti-cancer drugs under Medicare Part B should be extended immediately to all oral anti-cancer drugs. Medicare beneficiaries have come to expect that the program will offer quality cancer care when they join the millions of Americans who have been diagnosed with cancer. Without passage of H.R. 1624, their ability to access quality cancer care may be in doubt.

We hope we can count on your support of H.R. 1624 as a co-sponsor and your vote to make it law at the earliest possible opportunity.

#### 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.  
Association of American Cancer Institutes  
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  
International Myeloma 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  
The Wellness Community  
US TOO! International, Inc.  
Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization

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