



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

October 23, 2003

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senate
104 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Hatch:

As advocates for people with cancer, the undersigned organizations write to express our appreciation for your interest in, and support of, legislation to make oral cancer drugs immediately available to Medicare beneficiaries. This legislation would provide a transitional benefit making oral cancer drugs available within 90 days of enactment, while the complexities of a new benefit structure will delay implementation of overall drug coverage until the beginning of 2006, at the earliest. Cancer patients will no doubt welcome the accelerated access to these life-saving therapies.

Newly available oral cancer drugs are the vanguard of targeted therapies that address the specific genetic or molecular defect that promotes cancer without damaging healthy cells. They thus offer hope of effective cancer treatment without the terrible side effects that have been associated with chemotherapy. Cancer patients deserve access without delay to these truly revolutionary drugs. In addition, it is long overdue that Medicare beneficiaries have access to tamoxifen and other hormonal agents used to treat breast and prostate cancer.

Medicare currently covers most cancer drugs because they are administered by providers and reimbursed through a global fee. Medicare also covers oral cancer drugs if they have an injectable equivalent. Extending coverage to the relatively few oral cancer drugs not currently covered will rationalize the benefit structure and eliminate fiscal incentives to choose one form of treatment over another. When a beneficiary has cancer, the only consideration should be: what is the best treatment option?

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
October 23, 2003
Page 2

Senator Hatch, you have long been a friend to the cancer community, and we are counting on you to help once again. As a Medicare Conferee, you are uniquely positioned to help ensure that beneficiaries with cancer will have access to these life-saving therapies as soon as possible. Thank you for all you have done, and will do, for people with cancer.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

Alliance for Lung Cancer
American Cancer Society
American Society for Therapeutic
Radiology & Oncology, Inc.
Association of American Cancer Institutes
Cancer Care, Inc.
Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation
Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative
Groups
International Myeloma Foundation
Kidney Cancer Association
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Lymphoma Research Foundation
Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Prostate Cancer Coalition
North American Brain Tumor Coalition
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation
Us Too! International – Prostate Cancer
Education and Support
The Wellness Community
Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization

cc: Bruce Artim
Patricia Knight
Pattie DeLoatche