



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

November 6, 2003

Dear Conferee:

As national organizations dedicated to supporting cancer treatment and research, we strongly endorse the transitional provision that would extend Medicare coverage to all oral cancer drugs during the two-year period before implementation of a comprehensive drug benefit. This provision addresses a gap in cancer coverage that needs to be addressed immediately rather than waiting for the comprehensive benefit.

Congress has previously recognized that Medicare coverage of cancer drugs is an especially compelling issue. In 1993, Congress established a precedent for oral cancer drugs by covering all drugs that were available in both oral and injectable form. The provision would fill a gap in cancer coverage that results from the increasing trend for cancer drugs to be available only in oral formulation. Today, many of the most important new cancer drugs come only in oral form, and it is imperative that Medicare beneficiaries with cancer have access to these life-extending therapies for breast cancer, lung cancer, blood cancers and others.

This transitional provision comes at a small price in relative terms. The estimated cost of the provision would be only \$400 million, or about one-tenth of one percent of the overall cost of the drug benefit. Beneficiaries are concerned that their proposed drug benefit will have no impact on their access for at least two years. This provision addresses that concern, offering immediate benefit to beneficiaries with cancer.

Cancer is a disease that disproportionately affects the elderly, and Medicare's program of health insurance for the aged should accordingly pay special attention to access for beneficiaries with cancer and fully realize the precedent for cancer drug coverage already established by Congress. As the Conference draws to a conclusion, we urge all of the Conferees to consider Seriously the inclusion of this important provision. It is not only good policy, but it is also good politics, as no disease is more frightening, or its treatment more compelling, than cancer.

November 6, 2003

Page 2

Thank you in advance for your support of people with cancer who look forward to passage of this important transitional provision.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

Alliance for Lung Cancer
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 and Prevention Foundation
The Children's Cause, Inc.
Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative
Groups
Colorectal Cancer Network
International Myeloma Foundation
Kidney Cancer Association

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Lymphoma Research Foundation
Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
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 Network
The Wellness Community
Y -ME National Breast Cancer Organization

cc: Medicare Conferees