



October 25, 2007

Legislation to Avert Cuts to DXA Reimbursement Soon to be Introduced –

Contact your Representative Now

Representative Shelley Berkley (D- Nevada) is planning to introduce legislation in support of sustained funding for dual energy x-ray absorptiometry (DXA) and vertebral fracture assessment (VFA) services. The Endocrine Society, working with the National Osteoporosis Foundation and several of its sister societies, has been working toward a legislative fix for the drastic Medicare reimbursement cuts to DXA and VFA. The bill, the Medicare Fracture Prevention and Osteoporosis Testing Act will overturn these cuts, which CMS has already begun implementing. The cuts, which in total will reduce payment for DXA tests from \$140 in 2006 to \$35 in 2010, have made it difficult for providers such as endocrinologists to continue to offer DXA and VFA tests to their patients in the office setting. Many providers are discontinuing DXA and VFA testing in their offices and imaging centers as a result of the dramatic reductions in payment.

Representative Berkley is currently looking for additional members of the House of Representatives to become original co-sponsors of this legislation. You can help by taking a minute to e-mail your member of Congress. You can do so by clicking on “Action Alert: DXA Legislation to be Introduced – Contact Your Representative Now!” at the following link: <http://capwiz.com/endocrine/home/>. Let them know that you would like them to be an original co-sponsor of the **Medicare Fracture Prevention and Osteoporosis Testing Act**. A sample letter has been created for you; you may customize it if you wish.

If you have additional questions on this legislation or on contacting your member of Congress, please contact Holly Whelan, Manager, Health Policy at hwhelan@endo-society.org.

Senate Passes L-HHS Appropriations Bill; President Has Vowed to Veto

On October 23, the Senate passed the House FY2008 Labor-HHS-Education (L-HHS) Appropriations Bill by a vote of 75-19. The bill provides the National Institutes of Health (NIH) with \$29.89 billion in FY2008, an apparent increase over FY2007 of \$1 billion or 3.5 percent. However, the bill requires NIH to transfer \$201 million to the Global AIDS Fund, thereby decreasing the effective increase for NIH-supported programs to \$799 million or 2.8 percent. The next step is for House and Senate members to agree upon a final version in conference.

The President has threatened to veto all appropriations bills that exceed his proposed budget requests, and the L-HHS bill does so by \$9 billion. In the event of a veto, both the House and the Senate would need a subsequent 2/3-majority vote to override the veto.

While both chambers passed the measure with a veto-proof margin, concern remains that some senators may change their votes in a veto-override attempt. These concerns are prompted in part by the actions of Senate Republicans themselves, who offered a motion prior to the recent vote that the bill be sent back to the subcommittee with instructions to meet the President's proposed spending limit. The amendment did not pass but did receive the support of 40 senators, indicating that the Senate may not have the requisite 67 votes to override a veto.

After an agreement is reached in conference and a final version is prepared, both chambers will vote again on the consensus measure. This vote may provide further insight into the potential for a veto override.

Society Approves New Clinical Practice Guideline

During its recent October meeting, The Endocrine Society's Council approved the latest clinical practice guideline (CPG) from the Society titled *Evaluation and Treatment of Hirsutism in Premenopausal Women*. A patient guide (companion piece to the CPG) will also be developed by The Hormone Foundation for physicians to distribute to their patients.

The guideline was developed by a task force of content experts chaired by Kathryn A. Martin, MD, and the level of scientific evidence in the document was rated and the recommendations graded using the Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluation (GRADE) system. The completed guideline underwent review by the Society's Clinical Guidelines Subcommittee, Clinical Affairs Core Committee, and membership at large prior to final revisions and submission for Council approval.

CPGs currently available from the Society are *Evaluation and Treatment of Adult Growth Hormone Deficiency*, *Testosterone Therapy in Adult Men with Androgen Deficiency Syndromes*, *Androgen Therapy in Women*, and the *Management of Thyroid Dysfunction during Pregnancy & Postpartum*.

The Society has eight other guidelines nearing completion and coming soon. *Case Detection, Diagnosis, and Treatment of Patients with Primary Aldosteronism*, is available online now until November 10, 2007, for member review and comment at <http://www.endo-society.org/apps/MDDocReview/Document.cfm?DocumentID=25>.

The remaining guidelines are in various stages of the process. The topics are: Cushing's Syndrome, Continuous Glucose Monitoring, Hypoglycemia, Vitamin D & Bone, Lipids, Treatment of Transgender Individuals, and Metabolic Syndrome.

Guidelines are available for free download and purchase at <http://www.endo-society.org/publications/guidelines/index.cfm>. Please contact the Society's Government & Public Affairs department at govt-prof@endo-society.org for more information.

Society Approves Three New Position Statements

On October 20, the Society's Council approved three new position statements—on biomedical research funding, access to diabetes supplies, and monitoring drug shortages. Position statements outline the Society's position on current and salient topics in science and medicine and are developed to support the Society in its advocacy on behalf of all members. The Society's summary positions on the issues as outlined in the statements are included below, and the documents can be viewed in their entirety by clicking on the link at the bottom of the page.

Biomedical Research Funding

The Endocrine Society remains deeply concerned about the future of biomedical research in the United States without sustained support from the federal government. The Society strongly supports the continued increase in federal funding for biomedical research in order to provide the additional resources needed to enable American scientists to address the burgeoning scientific opportunities and new health challenges that continue to confront us. Therefore:

- The federal government should continue to increase funding levels for NIH, DOE, NASA, and VA annually by sums necessary to keep pace with inflation and maintain the growth experienced during the NIH doubling period.
- For FY2008, The Endocrine Society recommends that the agencies that support biomedical research receive the following appropriations in order to recoup the losses caused by biomedical inflation, fund necessary new research programs, and build on the discoveries made during the doubling period:
 - National Institutes of Health - \$30.8 billion
 - Department of Energy's Office of Science - \$4.36 billion
 - National Aeronautics and Space Agency - \$39.5 million for biological sciences research
 - Department of Veterans Affairs - \$480 million for VA Medical and Prosthetics Research Program and an increase in research infrastructure support to \$45 million

Access to Diabetes Supplies

The Endocrine Society strongly supports efforts to ensure the accessibility, affordability, and adequacy of blood glucose test strips and other related supplies for the millions of Americans who require this care. As such:

- Federal and state governments must determine ways to ensure the affordability of blood glucose test strips and related supplies that are not hindered by the high cost of co-pays or deductibles.
- Federal and state governments must ensure that health care coverage options provide access to an adequate number of blood glucose test strips – as determined or prescribed by a physician – to maintain optimal glucose control.
- The Society encourages medical device manufacturers to adopt policies that provide broader access to free or low-cost diabetes supplies such as blood glucose test strips.
- The Society encourages insurers and health plans to classify blood glucose test strips as a pharmaceutical product, not durable medical equipment, so as not to inflict separate and costly deductibles on patients.

Monitoring Drug Shortages

The Endocrine Society is concerned that access to important medications may be limited without prior notice to the FDA, providers, and patients. Therefore, the Society supports:

- Mandatory reporting to the FDA by drug manufacturers when a brand name or generic drug shortage or discontinuation occurs, regardless of the availability of alternative medications.
- Strict enforcement and expansion of U.S. Code requiring the FDA to distribute information to appropriate physician, healthcare provider, and patient organizations when a brand or generic drug shortage or discontinuation occurs, regardless of the availability of alternative medications.

All position statements are developed through an exhaustive internal review process. Position statements on access to diabetes supplies and monitoring drug shortages were developed and approved by the Clinical Affairs Core Committee (CACC) with further approval by the Advocacy and Public Outreach Core Committee (APOCC). The position statement on biomedical research funding was developed and approved by the APOCC. All three statements were posted on the Society's web site for Society member comment prior to final approval by Council.

To view these, and all of the Society's position statements, please go to <http://www.endo-society.org/publicpolicy/policy/index.cfm>.

The Endocrine Society to Sponsor 2nd Science Writers Conference

On December 7, 2007, The Endocrine Society will present the second in its *Hormones & Health* series of science writers conferences. The purpose of these events is to raise awareness among the public and policymakers of the practice and science of endocrinology by educating medical, science, and general assignment reporters and their editors about current directions in research, the fundamentals of clinical practice, and the connections between salient national health issues and the contributions of endocrinologists.

Frontier medical discoveries and national health policy issues are among the most prominent and widely read news reports. The public's strong interest in these topics creates a constant demand for stories on the latest breakthroughs in medical science and expert analysis of complex healthcare data. Recent examples—such as the safety of diabetes medication, funding for the National Institutes of Health, and the pros and cons of hormone replacement therapy—demonstrate just how important it is for The Endocrine Society to be recognized as an authoritative and responsive source for information to the media.

The Society creates opportunities for the media to learn about these and other leading-edge topics in endocrinology through its series of media roundtables and science writer conferences. The science writer conference program began in December 2005 with the *Hormones = Health* symposium in New York. At that strongly attended event, Society members presented a wealth of information on several salient medical topics. The positive reviews from attendees indicated that the conference was a valuable service for journalists.

The 2007 conference will build on that successful foundation while reaching out to a new set of reporters and journalists by holding the conference in Washington, D.C., at the historic Hay-Adams hotel, which is located near the National Press Club building. The theme for this year's conference will be "Hormones through Life," and will feature Society members from a wide range of disciplines who will address the intricate connections between hormones and health during specific stages of a person's life.

Additional information, including speakers, specific topics, and schedules will be on the Society's website: <http://www.endo-society.org/writers07/>.

Society Encourages Clinicians to Participate in DXA Survey

In an effort to identify priorities regarding error sources and standardization in the practice of dual energy x-ray absorptiometry, the International Society for Clinical Densitometry (ISCD) is conducting an online survey of healthcare providers who perform this test. ISCD is working with the National Institute of Standards and Technology to define standardized measurement parameters to improve the accuracy and cross-comparability of bone mineral density as measured by DXA.

The Endocrine Society encourages its members who perform DXA scans to take the online survey, which should take less than 5 minutes to complete. To participate in the survey, go to <http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB226XPQ2ZKXSX>. Responses will help to refine priorities for the standardization project.

For questions regarding articles listed in *Endocrine Insider* or information on advocacy and policy activities within The Endocrine Society, contact the Government & Public Affairs department:

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