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Society Responds to Stem Cell Ruling, Urges Member Action

The Endocrine Society has asked its members to contact their members of Congress in support of a legislative fix to the recent judicial blockade of embryonic stem cell research. The District Court decision to grant a temporary injunction halting federally funded embryonic stem cell research interrupts potentially life-saving work and runs counter to longstanding Presidential policy that has been tacitly supported by Congress for years.

Congress is expected to look for a legislative fix upon its return next month, and the Society has encouraged its members to urge their congressional leaders to employ all necessary legislative options. Society members and non-members can send letters to their senators and representatives through the link provided below. A draft letter has been created and may be edited with personal touches.

To advocate for stem cell research: <http://www.endo-society.org/advocacy/capwiz.cfm>

The Endocrine Society strongly supports federal funding for human embryonic stem cell research and, in response to the court's ruling, has re-issued its October 2009 stem cell [position statement](#). The Society will continue to monitor ongoing developments and will again enlist its members to reach out to Congress when a legislative vehicle has been identified.

Society Advocates for Appropriate Payment for Endocrinologists

To ensure adequate reimbursement for endocrinologists, The Endocrine Society responded to two separate opportunities to have input into payment policies.

CMS Proposed Rule

The Endocrine Society submitted comments to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in response to the 2011 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Proposed Rule. The proposed rule makes recommendations on payment rates and policies for the upcoming year that impact Medicare payments.

The Society's comments [[comments on 2011 Physician Fee Schedule](#)] addressed five issues of concern to endocrinologists and their patients, including

1. Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies Competitive Bidding Program Issues (Diabetic Testing Supplies)

2. Diabetes Self-Management Training (DSMT) Services
3. Identifying, Reviewing and Validating the RVU's of Potentially Misvalued Codes
4. Incentive Payments for Primary Care Services
5. Consultation Code Billing Policy

CMS will review and consider the comments that are received from the public and release a Final Rule at the end of the year in which it will finalize policies and payment rates for 2011.

DXA and VFA

In separate comments to the National Correct Coding Initiative, The Society joined with the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, American College of Rheumatology, and International Society for Clinical Densitometry to oppose a proposed change that will impact CPT code 77080 [dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA), bone density study, 1 or more sites; axial skeleton (eg, hips, pelvis, spine)] and CPT code 77082 [(dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA), bone density study, 1 or more sites; vertebral fracture assessment)]. Because the procedure described by CPT code 77080 includes DXA studies of the spine, CMS believes that vertebral fracture assessment (VFA) is integral to the films and evaluation of the DXA studies of the spine and requires minimal effort on behalf of the physician or technician. As a result, CMS proposes that the two codes could not be billed by the same physician on the same patient on the same day. The Society opposes this change because the two procedures are distinctly different and performing VFA in conjunction with a DXA scan is not a simple add-on procedure. The Society contends that the additional work required to reposition and review the scans justifies separate payment codes. The comments can be viewed here: [DXA and VFA Letter](#).

CMS to Hold Provider Call on PQRI and E-Prescribing

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will host a national provider conference call on the 2010 Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) and Electronic Prescribing Incentive Program (eRx) from 2:30 to 4:00 pm EDT on Thursday, September 2, 2010. Participants must register for the call by visiting the following website: <http://www.eventsvc.com/palmettogba/090210>

Following a presentation on the 2010 eRx and a step-by-step review of how to start participating in the 2010 program by reporting the eRx measure, participants will be allowed to ask questions of CMS PQRI and eRx subject matter experts.

A PowerPoint slide presentation will be posted for download prior to the call on the PQRI webpage: http://www.cms.gov/PQRI/04_CMSSponsoredCalls.asp#TopOfPage.

For those unable to attend the live conference call, a transcript and MP3 file of the call will be available at least one week after the call at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/pqri>.

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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