



NASS 24TH ANNUAL MEETING

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North American Spine Society Responds to Health Care Reform Efforts on Capitol Hill

San Francisco, CA – The North American Spine Society (NASS), as a member of the Alliance of Specialty Medicine, recently sent a letter to House leaders in response to key provisions within H.R. 3962, the “Affordable Health Care for America Act” and H.R. 3961, the “Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act.” A multidisciplinary medical organization dedicated to fostering the highest quality, evidence-based and ethical spine care, NASS is particularly interested in elements related to physician payment, strengthening transparency among the medical field and medical liability reform.

“NASS has been a vocal advocate of making meaningful and permanent changes to the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) Formula under Medicare Part B a priority in health care reform. We are very supportive of provisions in H.R. 3961 which acknowledge the physician reimbursement system must be stable and adequate in order to continue to assure that Medicare beneficiaries have access to high quality care,” said Charles Branch Jr. MD, NASS President. “Replacing the SGR formula with a reasonable mechanism for updating Medicare physician fees is the first step toward maintaining appropriate access to specialty care.”

NASS is also encouraged by provisions in H.R. 3962 aimed at strengthening transparency in the medical profession and upholding professional standards that medical societies have in place to govern interaction between physicians and the pharmaceutical, biologics and device industries.

However, NASS remains concerned with the impact the provision in its current form will have on the funding of continuing medical education courses, which already are managed for conflict of interest through the accreditation process overseen by the American Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME). “Ethical and transparent partnerships between industry and medical associations play a role in the advancement of cutting edge science, clinical innovation and continuing medical education,” said Raj Rao, MD, NASS Advocacy Committee Chair.

Additionally, NASS continues to have concerns regarding the proposed creation of a Health Benefits Advisory Committee with little to no physician input or oversight. “Any such advisory body making decisions that intrude into the physician-patient relationship must include abundant representation by physicians actively involved in patient care,” said Rao. “NASS strongly supports language that guarantees a minimum of three physicians representing different specialties will serve on the Committee.”

Provisions related to medical liability reform also remain a concern. “Without question, cost containment and improvement in quality of care in our health care system will continue to be threatened without proven medical liability reforms,” said Branch. “While NASS appreciates the inclusion of language encouraging states to adopt liability reforms, stronger provisions are needed in order to alleviate the crisis many states and specialties are currently facing.”

NASS' 24th Annual Meeting, currently underway in San Francisco, will feature a symposium on Thursday, November 12, *The Great American Health Care Debate: What Does Our Future Hold*, aimed at revealing methods to reform health care in the U.S. through value-based purchasing and the application of evidence-based medicine in coverage decisions. Stephen L. Ondra, MD, NASS member and Senior Policy Advisor on Health Affairs in the Office of the Secretary at the Department of Veterans Affairs, will also address the membership in a keynote address sharing his experience in the development and debate of current health policy issues. NASS members will also meet on Friday, November 13, to discuss the health care reform packages that have been offered and the steps NASS has taken to ensure that any bill that is enacted will not have a negative impact on patients and physicians' practices.

About NASS

The North American Spine Society (NASS) is a multidisciplinary medical organization dedicated to fostering the highest quality, evidence-based and ethical spine care by promoting education, research, and advocacy. NASS is comprised of more than 5,500 members from several disciplines including orthopedic surgery, neurosurgery, physiatry, neurology, radiology, anesthesiology, research, physical therapy and other spine care professionals. For more information, visit www.spine.org.

About NASS' 24th Annual Meeting

NASS' 24th Annual Meeting is being held in San Francisco, November 10-14, 2009, at the Moscone Center South. For more information, or to view press releases related to the meeting, please visit [NASS' Annual Meeting Web site](#).