The Washington Times sits down with the sponsor of the Medicare Sequester COVID MORTALITY Act

**Congress should address Medicare problems due to pandemic STAT**

**Cumulative Reduction in MPFS Spending**

**January-June 2020 for Selected Specialties**

| Specialty | Pre-COVID | Pandemic
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<tr>
<td>Internal Medicine</td>
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<td>Surgery</td>
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**Schneider:** The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges, including precision medicine and the work of the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP). Congress, in its pursuit of ensuring that the pandemic is contained and that the public is protected, has passed several measures to address these challenges. However, recent data analyses indicate that Medicare spending on physician services has been affected by the pandemic.

**TWT:** Who is pushing for this back home? Are they working on this together?

**Schneider:** There's a lot of support for this. The leaders of the AMA have been working closely with the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) to bring together the voices of physicians and health care providers. The AAMC represents more than 190 medical schools and educational institutions, as well as nearly 100,000 physicians and other health care professionals. The AMA has been working closely with the AAMC to ensure that the needs of physicians and health care providers are addressed.

**TWT:** What's the fear here? Are you worried about cuts jeopardizing patient access?

**Schneider:** We are concerned about cuts jeopardizing patient access. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on health care spending. The federal government, through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), has implemented a number of measures to address the pandemic, including the suspension of Medicare payments for elective procedures and the implementation of a temporary moratorium on non-essential procedures. These measures have had a significant impact on health care providers, particularly those in rural areas and underserved communities.

**TWT:** What's the status of the legislation?

**Schneider:** We are hopeful that the legislation will pass. The bill is supported by a bi-partisan group of lawmakers who are working together to address the challenges posed by the pandemic. The bill includes measures to support health care providers and ensure that they are able to continue providing care to patients during the pandemic. The bill also includes measures to support the health care workforce and ensure that they are able to continue providing care to patients during the pandemic.

**TWT:** What's next? What are the goals?

**Schneider:** Our goal is to ensure that the needs of physicians and health care providers are addressed. We are working closely with the AAMC and AMA to ensure that the needs of physicians and health care providers are addressed. We are also working with other organizations to ensure that the needs of physicians and health care providers are addressed. We are committed to ensuring that physicians and health care providers have the support they need to continue providing care to patients during the pandemic.

**TWT:** What's the timeline for action?

**Schneider:** We are committed to ensuring that physicians and health care providers have the support they need to continue providing care to patients during the pandemic. We are working closely with the AAMC and AMA to ensure that the needs of physicians and health care providers are addressed. We are also working with other organizations to ensure that the needs of physicians and health care providers are addressed. We are committed to ensuring that physicians and health care providers have the support they need to continue providing care to patients during the pandemic.
Now is not the time for Congress to pull back resources and funding for our frontline physicians and other health care professionals as we provide needed care to our patients.

By Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, MACP

Vulnerable patients will suffer most with congressional inaction

As health professionals, we need every resource available to meet the significant challenges that remain, especially as we work to keep our surgical practices open and available to meet the needs of our fellow Americans. Under the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) planned physician payment cuts for surgical services, patients who rely on Medicare for their medical treatment, especially America’s seniors, may encounter issues accessing care while jeopardizing the financial stability of physicians and their practices.

Congress must act now to stop these deep Medicare cuts and preserve patient access to care. We are asking Congress to pass legislation that would eliminate the damaging payment cuts for surgical and other health care professionals while providing needed care to our patients. The arbitrary payment cuts that are looming are not due to a reduction in the needs of Medicare beneficiaries or changes in care that we, as physicians, provide. Since 2013, Medicare spending has been subject to “sequestration,” a process that enacts automatic, across-the-board reductions in Medicare payments to physicians and other health care professionals. Without congressional intervention, on April 1, Medicare payments will be cut by two percent across-the-board.

In addition, spending that was included in the recently-enacted American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 would trigger further cuts under “pay-as-you-go” rules that require any new spending in any congressional legislation to be balanced by an equal amount in cuts. The new law is critical in continuing our momentum in bringing down COVID-19 infection rates and deaths. ACE is very supportive of this legislation. It is important that the American Rescue Plan helps us to fight the pandemic and improve access to care for our patients. However, while those things are necessary, they require spending on the part of the federal government. This means that the care we require—that would amount to an additional four percent, or approximately $36 billion, cut to the Medicare program at the end of the year.

Congress needs to take action now to stop these deep and permanent Medicare cuts. Absent congressional action, these extreme spending cuts will adversely affect the viability of physician practices and have a deleterious effect on the patients they serve.

Our strained health care system requires a legislative fix

By J. Wayne Meredith, MD, FACS, MCCM

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) urges Congress to act now to stop deep Medicare cuts that will greatly reduce access to surgical care. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, surgeons across the country stopped performing surgical procedures. According to a recent survey, one in three surgeons was at risk of closing due to the financial stresses created by COVID-19. The financial strain is even greater on surgeons in private practice, who are trying to maintain payrolls and keep their doors open. Fewer surgeons means less access to lifesaving care at a time when our country is already weathering the greatest public health crisis of our time. As health professionals, we need every resource available to meet the significant challenges that remain, especially as we work to keep our surgical practices open and available to meet the needs of our fellow Americans.

By J. Wayne Meredith is president of the American College of Surgeons (ACS) and a primary care internal medicine physician in Thomson, Ga. ACS is the largest medical specialty society in the U.S., with 130,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical student members who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and comprehensive care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.
Good health doesn’t begin and end in the exam room. It’s in our homes and streets. Our hearts and minds. Our halls of government and businesses, big and small.

It takes patients, physicians, innovators and policymakers. Everyone, working side by side to achieve optimal health for all.

For nearly 175 years, the American Medical Association has brought people across states, industries and aisles to improve health care in our country.

Together, we’ll ensure the future is even brighter.