

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION

June 5, 2002

The Honorable Nancy L. Johnson
United States House of Representatives
RHOB - Room 2113
Independence and South Capitol St., SW
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Johnson:

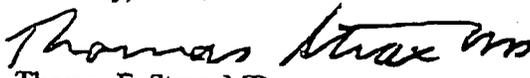
The American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (AAPM&R), a medical specialty society of approximately 7,000 physical medicine and rehabilitation physicians, known as physiatrists, wishes to express its support for the provisions in the Medicare bill developed by yourself, Congressmen William M. Thomas (R-CA) and W.J. "Billy" Tauzin (R-LA) regarding the Medicare fee schedule update.

Our member physiatrists provide physical medicine and rehabilitation services to adults and children with physical disabilities such as stroke, traumatic brain injury, spinal injury, limb loss, and chronic pain. Medicare patients constitute a considerable segment of patients of this specialty and services are provided in rehabilitation hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, outpatient facilities and in the physicians' offices.

The effect of the current 5.4% cut in Medicare fee schedule payments and the projected cuts for 2003, 2004 and 2005 on the practices of our members and their capacity to deliver quality care to their Medicare patients is potentially devastating. The solution provided in your bill, while it does not deal with this year's cut, does restore the update for 2003, 2004 and 2005 to about 2% for each those three years. Along with other changes, the annual update may be about what it would have been had the increase been based on the Medical Economic Index (MEI). We and other medical groups would hope to work with Congress in 2003 and 2004 to provide for an improved system of annual updates for 2006 and beyond.

We very much appreciate your efforts and those of Congressmen Thomas and Tauzin and staff to deal with this issue in all of its technical detail and to produce this reasonable solution. While we would prefer the repeal of the current SGR system governing annual fee schedule updates, and the use of a modified MEI approach, we recognize the exigencies of the budgetary situation and the needs of beneficiaries for improved coverage and other providers for payment protections. In this respect, we wish to express our concern for the potential cuts in the medical education IME payment and the possibility of the reimposition of therapy caps under Medicare Part B.

Sincerely,


Thomas E. Strax, MD



President
Thomas P. Strax, MD
Professor & Chairman, Dept of PM&R
UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson
Medical School
Medical Director
JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute
66 James Street
Edison, NJ 08820-3917
Telephone (732) 321-7070
Fax (732) 906-4910
e-mail: tstrax@slsolaris.rwj.org

President-Elect
Daniel Dumitru, MD, PhD
San Antonio, TX

Vice President
Claire V. Wolfe, MD
Columbus, OH

Secretary
Joel M. Press, MD
Chicago, IL

Treasurer
Steve M. Gnats, MD, MHA
Wheaton, IL

Past President
Gail L. Gamble, MD
Rochester, MN

Members-at-Large
David X. Cifu, MD
Richmond, VA

Maury Ellenberg, MD
Detroit, MI

Bruce M. Gans, MD
West Orange, NJ

Mark C. Race, MD
Jacksonville, TX

Robert D. Rondinelli, MD, PhD
Kansas City, KS

Sridhar V. Vasudevan, MD
Milwaukee, WI

President, I'ASSOR
William F. Michco, MD
San Juan, PR

AMA Delegate
Leon Reinstein, MD
Baltimore, MD

President, Resident Physician Council
Robert Walker, MD
Richmond, VA

*Editor of Archives of Physical
Medicine and Rehabilitation*
Jeffrey R. Basford, MD
Rochester, MN

*Council of State PM&R
Society Presidents*
Joshua H. Kaufmann, MD
New Orleans, LA

Executive Director
Ronald A. Henrichs, CAE
Chicago, IL

One IBM Plaza, Suite 2500
Chicago, IL 60611-3604
Telephone (312) 464-9700
Fax (312) 464-0227
E-mail: info@aapmr.org
www.aapmr.org