

# MedPAC verifies drop in imaging spending, utilization

The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) acknowledged the recent downward trend in Medicare spending and utilization on medical imaging procedures in its annual March Report to Congress, a move applauded by the Medical Imaging and Technology Alliance (MITA).

MedPAC's annual report reaffirms its statement at a December 2011 public meeting that imaging services declined by 2.5 percent in 2010. The data are consistent with a MITA analysis of Medicare claims data commissioned last year. The MITA analysis demonstrated that spending on imaging services for each Medicare beneficiary has dropped 13.2 percent since 2006, when significant imaging-specific reimbursement cuts from the Deficit Reduction Act began to be implemented, and imaging utilization per beneficiary declined by 3 percent in 2010.

Contrary to the decline in imaging, spending for non-imaging Medicare services has grown by 20 percent since 2006 and non-imaging utilization increased 2 percent in 2010. The analysis also found that imaging is now a smaller portion of Medicare spending than it was at the turn of the century.

Congress and the Administration have cut imaging reimbursements eight times in six years, with payments for some services reduced more than 60 percent, including bone density screenings, arm and leg artery x-rays, as well as MRIs of the brain.

Other research has confirmed the downward trend in Medicare imaging use and spending. In December 2011, researchers at [Thomas Jefferson Medical University](#) found that from 2007 through 2009, there was significant curtailment of growth in CT and MRI, and the rate of nuclear medicine utilization actually decreased.

Gail Rodriguez, executive director of MITA, encouraged members of Congress to consider the findings before targeting medical imaging services for additional reimbursement cuts.