

Multi-Specialty Physicians Reject Imaging Proposal

The American Medical Group Association (AMGA) is urging congressional leaders to resist pressure from an alliance of radiologists and other stakeholders to pass legislation that would block certain multi-specialty physicians from providing advanced diagnostic services. AMGA states that the proposal would slow movement toward more integrated, coordinated care and result in access problems for many seniors.

The Alliance for Integrity in Medicare (AIM) has floated a draft legislative proposal, the Promoting Integrity in Medicare Act (PIMA) that would get rid of a Stark anti-referral provision, which currently allows multi-specialty groups to furnish some ancillary imaging services. The Congressional Budget Office has not scored the draft legislation nor has the coalition moved to get an independent cost analysis, but supporters of the proposal believe that it would save money.

AMGA sources say that while the legislation could potentially save money in the short-term, the long-term consequences would likely undermine any initial savings. Without access to advanced diagnostics from multi-specialty groups, many seniors would go undiagnosed, the group says. This would not only harm patients but could also result in seniors needing expensive treatments for conditions that could have been addressed earlier, sources say.

Supporters of the draft bill say that the intention is not to erode integrated care or to impact the actions of legitimate medical groups. The whole focus is to hone in on abusive use of the Stark law.

AIM is a broad coalition of medical specialty, laboratory, radiation oncology, and medical imaging groups, which includes the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO), American College of Radiology (ACR) and Radiology Business Management Association (RBMA).