

UPDATE



neurosurgery

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Neurosurgeons Announce Principles for Reforming the Medicare Physician Payment System

Groups emphasize that an updated payment system will preserve patient access to value-based care.

Washington, DC—The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) endorsed [principles](#) for reforming the Medicare physician payment system. In collaboration with the American Medical Association, the 120 state and national medical societies developed “Characteristics of a Rational Medicare Payment System,” which outlines a unified set of shared goals for improving the current system.

The Medicare physician payment system is on an unsustainable path that has failed to keep up with inflation over the years, threatening patient access to care. According to the [Medicare Trustees](#), physician payments have remained stagnant for nearly two decades, increasing just 7 percent from 2001 to 2020, while the cost of running a medical practice has increased by 46 percent based on the Consumer Price Index. By comparison, hospital updates totaled approximately 60 percent during this same period. The proposed reforms would ensure physician practice financial stability and predictability, thus safeguarding access to high-quality, value-based care.

“The current Medicare physician payment system is on life support and needs an overhaul. We are grateful that Congress has stepped in to mitigate steep cuts over the past few years, but comprehensive reform to reflect practice costs and inflation is needed,” stated **John K. Ratliff**, MD, FAANS, chair of the AANS/CNS Washington Committee.

“Congress must make the necessary investments in our Medicare system to fulfill the promise to our country’s seniors and individuals with disabilities to ensure they can be there for patients when and where patients need them,” Dr. Ratliff added.

The AANS and the CNS are also leading several coalition efforts, including the [Surgical Care Coalition](#), to prevent steep Medicare payment cuts and preserve patient access to care. In 2020 and 2021, Congress passed legislation that temporarily averted steep payment cuts, but physicians continue to face significant cuts in 2023 and beyond without additional federal legislation. The neurosurgical groups will continue to work with its coalition partners and Congress to develop detailed solutions consistent with these principles to address the systematic problems with the Medicare physician payment system.

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The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), founded in 1931, and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS), founded in 1951, are the two largest scientific and educational associations for neurosurgical professionals in the world. These groups represent over 8,000 neurosurgeons worldwide. Neurological surgery is the medical specialty concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of disorders that affect the entire nervous system, including the spinal column, spinal cord, brain and peripheral nerves. For more information, please visit www.aans.org, www.cns.org or www.neurosurgery.org. Follow us on [Twitter](#) or connect with us on [Facebook](#).