

UPDATE

neurosurgery

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 8, 2021

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Neurosurgeons Enthusiastic About Progress of Legislation to Streamline Prior Authorization in Medicare *Bipartisan bill reaches significant milestone with 227 co-sponsors*

Washington, DC—Today, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) expressed enthusiasm with the progress of legislation to streamline prior authorization in Medicare. Sponsored by Reps. **Suzan DelBene** (D-Wash.), **Mike Kelly** (R-Pa.), **Ami Bera**, MD, (D-Calif.) and **Larry Bucshon**, MD, (R-Ind.), the *Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act* ([H.R. 3173](#)) now has 227 bipartisan co-sponsors, enough to pass the House of Representatives if brought forward for a vote. This critical legislation would protect patients in Medicare Advantage from unnecessary prior authorization practices that limit their timely access to medically necessary care.

Prior authorization is a cumbersome process that requires physicians to obtain pre-approval for medical treatments or tests before rendering care to their patients. The process for obtaining this approval is burdensome and costly to physician practices, requiring physicians and their staff to spend an enormous amount of time each week negotiating with insurance companies. As a result, patients are now experiencing significant barriers to medically necessary care, even for treatments and tests that are eventually routinely approved.

“Prior authorization is a tactic that health plans use to cut costs, but its rampant overuse is now causing inappropriate delays and denials of medical treatments that our seniors need,” said **John K. Ratliff**, MD, FAANS, a practicing neurosurgeon at Stanford University, and chair of the AANS/CNS Washington Committee. “This legislation is essential to bring some sanity to this process so our patients, who suffer from painful and life-threatening neurologic conditions such as brain tumors, debilitating degenerative spine disorders, stroke and Parkinson’s Disease, can get timely medical care.”

A [survey](#) of neurosurgeons found that prior authorization is delaying access to necessary care. Wait times for prior authorization can be lengthy — typically taking between 2 to 14 days, but sometimes from 15 to more than 31 days. Prior authorization hassles can also cause patients to abandon treatment altogether. Finally, the survey demonstrated prior authorization has a negative impact on patient clinical outcomes.

“The AANS and the CNS look forward to working with Congress and the Biden Administration to get this bill across the finish line this year. Once again, we commend the sponsors of this legislations for their efforts to rethink the entire prior authorization process for the betterment of our patients,” Dr. Ratliff concluded.

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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 or www.cns.org, read our blog www.neurosurgeryblog.org, follow us on [Twitter](#) or connect with us on [Facebook](#).