

UPDATE

# neurosurgery

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## **Neurosurgeons Join New Coalition to Oppose Harmful Medicare Cuts**

*Surgical Care Coalition launched to stop Medicare cuts that could limit timely access to surgical care*

Washington, DC—Today, the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) reinforced their commitment to protecting patients, improving their quality of life, and ensuring timely access to neurosurgical care by joining the Surgical Care Coalition as founding members. The coalition was formed because of concerns about new Medicare payment policies for office and outpatient visits that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will implement in January 2021. Changes to these visit codes — also known as evaluation and management (E/M) codes — will reduce payments for surgical care, which may lead to reduced access to care for older Americans.

Together with the coalition, the AANS and CNS are working to stop these planned Medicare payment cuts. Specifically, the groups are asking Congress to waive Medicare’s budget neutrality requirements to prevent the cuts and to require CMS to apply the increased E/M payment adjustments to all 10- and 90-day global surgery codes. This will ensure that Medicare patients continue to have the best access — to the best care — when they need it and where they need it.

The Surgical Care Coalition recently commissioned a survey of more than 5,000 surgeons, which found that surgical practices are facing severe financial distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the cuts were announced before the pandemic, with the combined impact of the planned CMS cuts and the financial challenges due to COVID-19, surgeons and hospitals will face difficult decisions to keep surgical practices afloat. For neurosurgeons, the survey found that even before the CMS cuts take effect:

- More than one-half (54%) of respondents are concerned that they could be forced to shut down their practice, limiting choice and access to neurosurgical care;
- Three-quarters (74%) of neurosurgeons are concerned about the finances of their practice, and to keep the doors open, 38% have cut their own salary, and one-quarter (24%) have taken on debt as a result of COVID-19; and
- In the face of declining revenues, 86% of respondents are worried that they will have to cut employee’s salaries and 76% fear that they may have to permanently layoff employees.

Neurosurgeons take care of critically ill patients who suffer from painful and life-threatening neurologic conditions such as traumatic brain injury, brain tumors, debilitating degenerative spine disorders and stroke, and without timely neurosurgical care, our patients can face permanent neurologic damage or death,” said **John A. Wilson, MD, FAANS**, president of the AANS. “The planned cuts to Medicare payments will further stress a healthcare system critically affected by the pandemic crisis and may negatively impact Medicare beneficiaries’ access to care.”

**Steven N. Kalkanis, MD, FAANS**, president of the CNS, added, “It is essential that policymakers understand how these payment cuts may impact access to surgical care. COVID-19 has placed an unprecedented strain on our health care system, and additional Medicare payment cuts will not only threaten timely access to quality care but will also stress an already fragile health care system.”

— *More* —

## **About the Surgical Care Coalition**

The Surgical Care Coalition advocates for access to quality surgical care for all Americans. The coalition is comprised of 12 national surgical professional associations that proudly represent more than 150,000 surgeons working across the country with a common goal of improving the quality of care, and quality of life, for all patients. The founding members have met and informally worked together for nearly three decades to promote sound policy solutions to the U.S. Congress and federal regulatory agencies to solve the biggest challenges in health care.

## **Founding members of the Surgical Care Coalition**

American Academy of Ophthalmology	American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Association of Neurological Surgeons	Congress of Neurological Surgeons
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons	Society for Vascular Surgery
American College of Surgeons	Society of American Gastrointestinal and Endoscopic Surgeons
American Society for Surgery of the Hand	The American Society of Breast Surgeons
American Society of Breast Surgeons	The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons	

More information about the Surgical Care Coalition is available at [www.SurgicalCare.org](http://www.SurgicalCare.org).

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