Neurosurgery

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Neurosurgery Warns Real-World Consequences of Medicare Payment Cuts

WASHINGTON, DC — The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS), representing more than 4,000 neurosurgeons nationwide, expressed serious concerns regarding the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) calendar year (CY) 2027 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) final rule. Despite extensive feedback from the AANS and CNS, CMS finalized policies that threaten practice sustainability, undervalue complex surgical care, and impose additional financial and administrative burdens on physicians nationwide.

Alexander A. Khalessi, MD, MBA, Chair of the AANS/CNS Washington Committee, issued the following statement:

> "Medicare physician payment policy has become increasingly disconnected from clinical evidence and the realities of delivering surgical care. Despite repeated warnings from practicing neurosurgeons and our considerable efforts to provide CMS with rigorous clinical data, detailed analyses, and constructive recommendations, the final rule ignores our substantial concerns for neurosurgical patients. Instead, CMS continues to advance policies that compound payment reductions and administrative burdens without adequately accounting for their consequences for physicians and the patients they serve."
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> "Consolidation is already transforming American medicine, yet federal policymakers have largely failed to acknowledge how the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule has contributed to this trajectory. CMS cannot continue expecting physicians to do more with less while imposing increasingly complex and costly compliance requirements, including through value-based care models that too often add administrative burden without demonstrating commensurate improvements in patient care."
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> "We urge CMS to consider the cumulative consequences of its payment policies. As independent practices consolidate or close, competition diminishes, patient choice narrows, health care costs rise, and emergency response networks for stroke, trauma, and other time-sensitive neurologic conditions are placed at greater risk. These foreseeable outcomes risk undermining the very benefits and savings these policies are intended to achieve. We are at a critical inflection point for the future of health care delivery. The decisions CMS and Congress make today will shape the affordability, accessibility, and structure of American health care for years to come. The American people deserve sustainable access to world-class neurological care in the moments that matter most. The final rule moves us farther from that shared future."

The final rule makes significant changes to physician work valuation, practice expense (PE) reimbursement, global surgical payments, and quality reporting. Reducing payments based on generalized assumptions rather than service-specific evidence penalizes neurosurgeons for work and outcomes beyond their control.

For a summary and analysis of the final rule and its implications for neurosurgical practice, click here.

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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 10,000 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, and www.neurosurgery.org.*