

We've been saying it all along. The Complex Rehab Technology (CRT) community working together CAN and WILL produce positive changes in policy. It's through CRT stakeholders coming together that we're best positioned to protect and improve access. We saw real evidence of that in the month of June!

On June 23 the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced a policy correction stating it would not use Medicare Competitive Bid Program information to reduce Medicare payment rates for CRT power wheelchair accessories. This was the positive culmination of a two-year battle to avert significant cuts scheduled to go into effect on July 1. CMS' action preserved critical access to this specialized equipment for people with significant disabilities.

This was great news for those who rely on CRT power wheelchairs. If the policy correction had not been made, it would have resulted in CMS inappropriately using Medicare Competitive Bid pricing for "standard" wheelchair accessories to make significant cuts to payment rates for more complex CRT wheelchair accessories. These inappropriate cuts would have caused dramatic decreases in the availability of CRT power wheelchairs.

Unfortunately, the policy correction did not provide a fix for previous Medicare payment cuts to accessories used with CRT manual wheelchairs. But the effort to resolve that issue is not over. We are continuing to work on relief for those cuts as detailed later in this column.

There are lots of thanks to be shared for this major access win. We need to start with thanking Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price and CMS Administrator Seema Verma for making this needed policy correction. Their acknowledgement and action is greatly appreciated.

We send huge thanks to our CRT Sens. Bob Casey, D-Pa., and Rob Portman, R-Ohio, and Reps. Lee Zeldin, R-N.Y., and John Larson, D-Conn. for their leadership and commitment to protect access for people with disabilities. They led the congressional charge for two years!

Additional thanks go to the other Members of Congress, their staff and the respective committees' staff who also worked hard to resolve this. We particularly recognize the support from Sens. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah; Ron Wyden, D-Ore.; Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.; Thad Cochran, R-Miss.; and Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash.; Greg Walden, R-Ore.; Kevin Brady, R-Texas; Jim Sensenbrenner, R-Wis.; Pat Tiberi, R-Ohio; Diana DeGette, D-Colo.; David Loebsack, D-Iowa; and Joe Crowley, D-N.Y.

Please take a minute to email your Members of Congress and thank them for their help in resolving this issue. We need to build and cultivate these relationships as we certainly have more work ahead.

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