

Colorado Pain Society Newsletter #3

Advocacy

CPS would like to step up its advocacy efforts, not only locally, but also nationally. We are in the early stages of exploring a push for better access to behavioral healthcare for our pain patients. We would also like to enlist your support for key national legislative measures that CPS believes will benefit our members and patients. The following links will help you contact your representatives. Consider bookmarking them for timely communication with your elected officials.

National Senate and Congressional Representatives:

<https://www.bennet.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/write-to-michael>

<https://www.hickenlooper.senate.gov/email-john/>

<https://www.house.gov/htbin/findrep>

Find Your Colorado State Representatives:

<https://leg.colorado.gov/FindMyLegislator>

Key Medicare physician reform bill introduced in Congress

The bipartisan bill, H.R. 2474, the “Strengthen Medicare for Patients and Providers Act,” was introduced to finally reform the outdated Medicare payment system. Physician payment rates have been subject to a 6-year freeze until 2026 and are seeing 2% across-the-board pay cuts that started in January. Following the freeze period, the updates for most physicians will be limited to 0.25% updates, far below inflation rates. Please write your representatives in support of passage of this bill, which would tie the Medicare physician payment schedule to the Medicare Economic Index and protect access for the 65 million Americans covered by Medicare.

<https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/medicare-medicaid/key-medicare-physician-pay-reform-bill-introduced-congress>

Access to Behavioral Healthcare

Brent Van Dorsten, PhD, past president of the CPS, has researched the medical economics underlying poor access to behavioral healthcare for our pain patients. Despite successful advocacy efforts towards parity of healthcare coverage, the most significant barrier to access remains that of poor reimbursement for psychological

services. CMS RVU valuation and true reimbursement, accounting for inflation, have been markedly reduced over time, with Medicare reimbursement being 37% of what it was in 1990 and the inflation adjusted “buying power” of psychological reimbursement being 56.1% higher in 2000 than it currently is. Relatively recently published articles show that commercial insurance reimburses providers somewhere between 13-15% LESS THAN MEDICARE for psychological services provided to healthcare patients - an enormously difficult position upon which to engage/employ psychologists.

Minemyer, P. (2019). Low reimbursement rates from private payers to mental health providers may curb patient access.

<https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/payer/low-reimbursement-rates-from-private-payers-to-mental-health-providers-may-curb-patient>

We all see the effects of this lack of access as well as understand the critical importance of being able to provide access to quality BH for our pain patients in need. We have upcoming meetings planned with key members of The Colorado Psychiatry Society and look to build bridges with the Colorado Psychological Association, and work closely with the Colorado Medical Society, Consortium on Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention, and other organizations to push forward with patient access, including psychological services reimbursement, initiatives.

Please look for communication from us when your actions may be needed in the form of contacting legislators or other community leaders to support these efforts.

Consider writing your representatives NOW to show support for:

Michael Bennet’s introduction of a bill to create mental health parity in Medicare and Medicaid, despite the bill admittedly being a “marker” and an “aspiration”.

<https://coloradosun.com/2023/03/22/michael-bennet-mental-health-parity/>

On Monday, March 27, 2023, nearly 200 psychologist advocates met with their respective members of Congress to address inequities in mental health services and ask for increased investments in the psychology workforce. A group of advocates from CPA (including Dr. Michelle Dawson, Dr. Helen Coons, Dr. Kay Balieau, Dr. Aimee Zisner and Morgan Nance and Ben Vonachen from APA met with the offices of Senators Hickenlooper and Bennet and Representatives DeGette and Crow. Advocates pressed these members of Congress to support two pieces of legislation which would increase access to mental health services for Medicare populations and to increase funding for two key workforce development programs, the Graduate Psychology Education (GPE) Program and the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP).

Please contact your representatives directly, CPS, or Michelle Dawson (CPA Federal Advocacy Coordinator) mdsepsych@gmail.com if you are interested in advocacy for psychology moving forward.

DEA Required Substance Use Disorder Training - ASAM

On June 27, 2023, a new one-time requirement will go into effect for all DEA prescribers to complete 8 hours of education on the treatment or management of patients with opioid or other substance use disorder. Details, links to training opportunities, and exemptions to training can be found at:

<https://www.asam.org/education/dea-education-requirements>

Additional SUD training details for Physician Assistants:

<https://www.aapa.org/news-central/2023/04/new-dea-requirement-for-registered-practitioners-to-complete-sud-oud-training-to-take-effect-june-27/>

OTC naloxone

Narcan spray by late summer, generic spray sooner???

<https://apnews.com/article/narcan-naloxone-overdose-opioids>

Dial 988 Mental Health Crisis Line

Colorado has enacted SB 22-196 to provide funds for this program.

<https://reimaginecrisis.org/map/>

Senate Bill 23-144

Senate Bill 23-144 was signed into law on 5/4/23. This law ensures that opioid prescriptions that are written in the context of well documented, reasonable medical care cannot be denied to patients solely based on the MME amount, nor can physicians be held liable for writing such prescriptions. Payors, pharmacies, nor governmental agencies can deny the filling of prescriptions, nor force tapering of opioid prescriptions solely based on MME dose levels. <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb23-144>

CPS Annual CME Conference on Chronic Pain 2023

Consider attending our annual educational meeting at The Hythe in Vail from October 13-15, 2023, where we will have a diversity of speakers and topics. **The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention is sponsoring a dual primary care and pain specialist agenda on Saturday (10/14) which will be available to PCPs for virtual or live attendance (at no cost to PCPs only)**, as well. CME is provided. Register at (PCP registration pending website update): <https://coloradopainsociety.org/annual-meeting-2023/>

J. Scott Bainbridge, MD - President, Colorado Pain Society