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November 16, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Reid:

The American Academy of Emergency Medicine, a national specialty society representing more than 5,000 board certified emergency medicine physicians, urges you to fix the Medicare patch. The patch Congress passed in June is only another temporary reprieve for seniors and baby boomers who rely on Medicare for their health care. In December, the Medicare physician payment cut will be a whopping 23%, increasing to nearly 26% in January. As emergency physicians acting on the front line of medicine, we see this cut as potentially disastrous for not only Medicare patients, but for all patients who require emergency care.

We need a long-term solution to this annual problem, so Congress will no longer need to apply short-term band aid fixes to stop impending cuts that get worse year after year. Seniors and the disabled who rely on Medicare, and military families who rely on TRICARE, expect access to health care and choice of physicians. Without repeal of the underlying formula that projects steep payment cuts to physicians, that access and choice of physicians are repeatedly put at risk.

An overwhelming majority of Congress – Democrats and Republicans alike – are on record stating that the Medicare physician payment formula is flawed and should be repealed. Without a permanent fix, many physicians who practice outside of emergency medicine may be forced to cut services to Medicare patients or stop seeing them altogether.

Elderly patients will find it increasingly difficult to be treated by their physicians which will result in increased diversion of Medicare patients to EDs for evaluation and management. These diversions will further destabilize the extremely tenuous crowding that already exists in the vast majority of hospital emergency departments in the United States.

Delaying the problem is not a solution. Congress must replace the broken payment system before more damage is done and cannot be reversed.

Sincerely yours,

Howard Blumstein, MD, FAAEM  
President

**SIMILAR LETTER SENT TO ALL MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.**

**American Academy of Emergency Medicine**

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