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Medical  
Association  
of Georgia

*Building a Better State of Health Since 1849*

## **MAG URGING GEORGIA PHYSICIANS, PATIENTS TO CONTACT U.S. SENATORS FOR MEDICARE FUNDING SOLUTION**

MAG President Jack M. Chapman Jr., M.D., is calling on all Georgians to become advocates as Medicare physician payment rates are scheduled to be cut 10.6 percent on July 1 of this year and an additional 5 percent or more on January 1, 2009.

Dr. Chapman is urging Georgia physicians and patients to contact U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss and U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson and their U.S. Representative by using the American Medical Association Grassroots Hotline at 800.833.6354 (to call) or [www.capwiz.com/ama/home](http://www.capwiz.com/ama/home) (to send an e-mail) and request that they come up with an alternative plan to stop the 10.6 percent Medicare cut on July 1 and the 5 percent Medicare cut on January 1, 2009.

“Access to health care for seniors is at risk,” Dr. Chapman warns. “Furthermore, rapidly eroding margins are threatening the viability of medical practices in Georgia.” Today’s Medicare physician payment rates have not changed since 2001, he says.

The American Medical Association (AMA) says that Georgia physicians stand to lose \$330 million for the care of elderly and disabled patients over the 18-month period beginning July 1, 2008. On average, each Georgia physician faces a Medicare cut of \$17,000 over that period.

AMA reports that a number of surveys project a crisis in patient access if Medicare payments fall further behind practice cost increases, including...

- An AMA survey of almost 9,000 physicians discovered that 60 percent said they would have to limit the number of new Medicare patients they treat if this year’s pay cut goes through. More than half of those physicians also said they could not meet their current payroll with a 10 percent Medicare pay cut and would be forced to reduce their staff.
- The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission reports that 30 percent of Medicare patients looking for a new primary care physician already have trouble finding one.
- The Medical Group Management Association finds that 24 percent of group practices already limit their acceptance of new Medicare patients.
- The Council on Graduate Medical Education is predicting the country will face a shortage of 85,000 physicians by 2020.
- An Association of American Medical Colleges workforce study found that 51 percent of physicians over the age of 50 cite “insufficient reimbursement” as a “very important” factor in retirement decisions.

MAG members should call MAG’s Government Relations Department at 678.303.9290 or 800.282.0224 with questions. Members of the media should contact Tom Kornegay at 404.405.2433.