

THE COALITION TO PRESERVE PATIENT ACCESS TO PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

Press conference: “CMS: Compromised Quality of Patient Care”

Testimony from: Bernice Kauffman, RN,
Musculoskeletal Patient Receiving Athletic Training Services

Representatives from The Coalition to Preserve Patient Access to Physical Medicine and
Rehabilitation Services to Urge Congress to Overturn New CMS Rule

November 16, 2005

The Rayburn Building, Room 2257, Washington, D.C.

- I am a registered nurse who is familiar with the current rule change as both a long-term care consultant and patient.
- As a patient who has suffered from multiple musculoskeletal conditions over the past several years, I have often sought immediate care from my physician, who in turn has referred me to the appropriate health care professional. Now, my physician does not have the right to choose who will provide my care, even though he knows me best.
- In the past, I have repeatedly been treated by an athletic trainer who has helped me rehabilitate from injury quickly. The athletic trainer worked closely with my physician in the same office. This was not only a very effective quality of care but gave me the comfort of knowing my physician is involved in my ongoing care and immediately available to me and the athletic trainer. Now, because of this new ruling, the athletic trainer is no longer available to me and is forced to go back to school to get the CMS-approved provider credentials he needs to see Medicare patients and so he can do what he did yesterday.
- Instead, I am delegated to a therapy provider who is now overscheduled and overworked. Many times, I see assistant therapists whom I don't believe have the same credentials and experience to adequately provide me, or the other patients in our clinic, with the treatment we require.
- As a nurse, I am well aware of the continued shortage of therapy providers. This, in addition to the fact that the number of people on Medicare will only escalate in the coming years just doesn't make sense. Why would Medicare choose to restrict our contact with quality health providers, so that instead we're faced with a shortage of care? This is not the treatment I was used to and I hope that comments from patients like me will help to make a difference in revising what Medicare has chosen to do.
- In short, if I'm not getting immediate treatment, my recovery is delayed, my injury continues and this can only lead to increased healthcare costs.

*Bernice Kauffman, RN, speaking on behalf of the Coalition to Preserve Patient Access to Physical
Medicine and Rehabilitation Services, Nov. 16, 2005*