



Idaho Medical Association

# IMAges

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## Medicare Pay Cut of Two Percent Set Under Budget

**Sequester** With physicians facing a two percent reduction in Medicare payments in just two weeks, it appears that Democrats and Republicans in the Congress are nowhere near a plan to avert the \$1.2 trillion in spending cuts.

The two percent Medicare cut is part of broader cuts required under the Budget Control Act of 2011, which will take the cleaver to domestic and defense spending to eliminate a total of \$1.2 trillion from the federal budget over the next decade. The sequestration cuts originally were scheduled to hit January 1 but were delayed two months when the American Taxpayer Relief Act became law January 3.

The IMA, in partnership with the AMA, has been urging Congress to avoid the sequestration and come to a solution that prevents cuts in Medicare and domestic health programs. In September, the AMA and more than 100 state and specialty medical associations sent a letter to Congress, explaining that a two percent cut would further restrict seniors' access to care and impede physicians' efforts to adopt needed health care innovations.

IMA physician leaders were in Washington, DC this week for the AMA's National Advocacy Conference. They met with the members of the Idaho Congressional delegation and urged them to take action to avert damaging cuts to Medicare reimbursement. *[Editor's Note: Please see related article regarding cuts to GME.]*

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**Are You Using Idaho's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program?** The statistics are staggering. Prescription drug abuse is the United States' fastest growing drug problem (The Office of National Drug Control Policy). In 2010, seven million individuals aged 12 or older were current nonmedical users of prescription drugs. In Idaho in 2011, over 20 percent of high school students reported taking a prescription drug without a doctor's prescription. These youth overwhelmingly reported that they obtained these drugs from family members or friends. What's more, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, prescriptions are now the drug of choice for 12 and 13 year olds.

The Idaho Medical Associations urges its members to take steps to limit the access youth and other nonmedical users have to prescription medications. The Idaho Board of Pharmacy collects certain data on all controlled substances dispensed and collates such data into patient profiles that are available within the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) to authorized users, such as prescribers, for authorized purposes, such as assisting in identifying illegal activity and avoiding inappropriate use of controlled substances. Evidence has shown that PMP's are effective in reducing prescription drug abuse by decreasing the time required for drug diversion investigations, reducing "doctor shopping," and changing prescriber behavior. Therefore, much attention has been devoted to establishing a robust PMP in Idaho, one that will allow for interstate sharing of information to ensure the most complete and accurate data.

While PMP's have demonstrated their effectiveness at reducing prescription drug abuse, the current number of Idaho prescribers using the PMP is disappointing. At the current time only 25 percent of Idaho prescribers are registered to use this system. In recognition of the fact that a prescriber's time is often very limited, the PMP system allows a staff member to be designated to access the program on behalf of the prescriber. Currently, participation in the system is voluntary, but this could change if more prescribers do not register and use it.

Please join the IMA in our efforts to reduce prescription drug abuse. Register for Idaho's PMP with the Board of Pharmacy and establish procedures in your practice to check this system when prescribing medications with high potential for abuse such as pain relievers, stimulants, and depressants. For additional information regarding Idaho's PMP and how to register, please contact Ellen Mitchell at the Board of Pharmacy, [ellen.mitchell@bop.idaho.gov](mailto:ellen.mitchell@bop.idaho.gov). For more information about prescription drug abuse in Idaho, please contact the Office of Drug Policy at 208-854-3040.

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**"Sunshine" Rule Shines Light on Financial Relationships Between Manufacturers, Providers** A final rule will require drug and device manufacturers to report payments or other transfers of value they make to physicians and teaching hospitals to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The increased transparency is intended to reduce potential conflicts of interest that physicians or teaching hospitals could face as a result of their relationships with manufacturers.

The rule applies to manufacturers of drugs, devices, and biological and medical supplies covered by Medicare, Medicaid, or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Under the rule, manufacturers and group purchasing organizations also are required to disclose physician ownership or investment interests to CMS.

Data collection will begin August 1, 2013, with applicable manufacturers and GPOs reporting the data through December 2013 to CMS by March 31, 2014. CMS will post the data to a public website by September 30, 2014, according to a release. Reporting and named parties will have an opportunity to review and correct reported information prior to publication.

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**Free Prescription Assistance Program for All Idaho Residents** The Idaho Rx Card is a free statewide prescription assistance program that offers free drug cards to all Idaho residents. The program provides discounts on both brand and generic medications with an average savings of around 30 percent. The program has no restrictions to membership, no income requirements, no age limitations and there are no applications to fill out. Everyone is eligible to receive savings!

The Idaho Rx Card was launched to help uninsured and underinsured residents afford their prescription medications. The program can also be used by people who have health insurance coverage with no prescription benefits, which is common in

many health savings accounts (HSA) and high deductible health plans. Additionally, people with prescription coverage can use the program to get a discount on prescription drugs that are not covered by insurance.

There are currently more than 56,000 pharmacy locations across the country participating in the program, including all major pharmacy chains. To locate participating pharmacies and search medication pricing, go to [www.idahorxcard.com](http://www.idahorxcard.com). There you can also learn more about the program and print customized cards for your friends, family, employees, etc. No personal information is required to print a card and all prescriptions processed through the program are completely confidential.

If you have any questions or would like hard cards for your patients, contact Eric Brown, Program Director for Idaho Rx Card, by sending an email to [ebrown@idahorxcard.com](mailto:ebrown@idahorxcard.com).

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**2013 Referral Directory of Idaho Physicians** The 2013 edition of the IMA's Referral Directory of Idaho Physicians is now being printed and will be available later this month. As a member benefit, each IMA physician member may request one complimentary copy. Additional copies are available for \$40.

Order forms are available on the IMA's website at <http://www.idmed.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=9>. Order your Directory today!

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**Residency Funding Targeted for Cuts; Contact Congress** Tell your members of Congress today that the March 1 cut to graduate medical education (GME) funding must be averted.

Without congressional action, the two percent sequester cuts to Medicare will adversely affect GME funding. Proposals for additional substantive cuts also have been placed on the table as lawmakers search for ways to reduce spending. Any funding reduction would compromise access to care for patients and further limit the number of residency positions for an ever-growing number of medical students.

According to estimates, the United States will experience a shortage of more than 90,000 physicians by 2020. That number is expected to surpass 130,000 by 2025.

We simply cannot afford to play politics with the future of medicine in America. It only takes a moment to urge your elected officials to preserve current levels of GME funding. Send an email through the AMA Physicians Grassroots Network today at <http://www.capwiz.com/ama/issues/alert/?alertid=62199646&type=CO>.

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**IMA Launches Facebook Page** The Idaho Medical Association has launched a new page on Facebook as a companion to the IMA's website and other communication channels. The IMA will use its presence on Facebook to feature time sensitive updates, resources, and other news from the Association and provide a place for IMA members to obtain and share information on everything relating to today's healthcare environment.

[Like us](#) on Facebook today to join the conversation!

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