Washington Update
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Financial Disclosure
• No relevant financial relationships to disclose.

ASRS Priority Issues
• Ensuring adequate Medicare physician payment.
• Protecting patient access to Part B drugs and preserving physician autonomy to provide appropriate treatment.
• Curbing plans’ use of prior authorization and step therapy.
Physician Payment: What Happened this Week

- ASRS advocated for immediate relief from the full 3.4% Medicare payment cuts that went into effect January 1, 2024.
- Advocacy efforts from all across medicine, including 660 ASRS members and practice staff sending 2327 messages to legislators, resulted in partial relief restoring approximately 50% of the cut.
- But Congress failed to fix the full cut.
- The final result – a 2.04% cut from 2023 payment levels.

Physician Payments – Two Decades Behind Inflation

Only Physicians Got Cut in 2024
Retina Codes Adjusted for Inflation

Physician Payment: What We Want

- Regular, inflation-based updates to the conversion factor.
- Modify budget neutrality in the fee schedule.
  - Recent annual cuts are due to budget neutrality.
  - Increase the threshold to trigger neutrality adjustments
  - Waive neutrality on new services – E/M add-on code, remote monitoring/AI
- Replace MIPS with a more clinically-meaningful and less burdensome alternative.
- Increase APM opportunities for specialists.

So what are we likely to get?

The political situation complicates our prospects.
Administration Priorities
1. Get re-elected.
2. Get re-elected.
5. Prevent further escalation of foreign conflicts.

Congressional Priorities Are Competing
Senate – Dem Control
• Help Biden get re-elected.
• Full-year funding agreement.
• Comprehensive immigration reform.
• Foreign aid.

House – GOP Control
• Prevent Biden from getting re-elected.
• Mike Johnson wants to keep his job.
• Move past current government funding crisis.
• Manage competing factions/slim majority.

Payment Advocacy – the rest of 2024
• ASRS and physician groups are focused on securing long-term reform.
  – First step: H.R. 2474 would tie physician payment to the Medical Economic Index (MEI) that measures healthcare inflation.
• Target the post-Election lame duck session for action on reform.
Utilization Management

- Prior authorization reform lost steam in the last Congress due to unexpectedly high score from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).
- CMS is implementing key provisions of the bill through the regulatory process.
- If CBO decides CMS reforms reduce the cost of the bill, it will likely pass quickly.

More Work Needed on Prior Auth/Step Therapy

- CMS excluded all drugs from MA electronic prior authorization regulations.
  - Acknowledged pushback from ASRS and other organizations in the final rule.
  - May address this in the future.
- CMS hasn’t taken any action to reign in MA step therapy.
  - Even though it says plans can’t have stricter requirements for medical necessity.

ASRS Advocacy Makes a Difference!

- CMS prior authorization regs implement important patient-protections and oversight of plans.
- ASRS was instrumental in securing changes to the MIPS Diabetes Cost measure to exempt retina specialists.
ASRS Advocacy Makes a Difference!

- ASRS successfully developed and CMS is implementing three new MIPS quality measures.
- ASRS successfully advocated for major changes to the Part B drug wastage policy to prevent under-dosing.

Help Support Inflation-Based Payment Updates
Contact Congress RIGHT NOW!

MDs/DOs  Practice Staff