



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE  
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September 25, 2012

Congressman Tom Price  
403 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressman Price:

The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC), a 53,000 member professional association for respiratory therapists, offers its support of HR 6490, *The Medicare DMEPOS Market Pricing Program Act of 2012*. As part of our mission, the AARC serves as an advocate for patients with pulmonary disease and their families so that they receive the highest quality of care in a safe and consistent manner.

If passed, the proposed legislation would implement a Market Pricing Program (MPP) for home medical equipment suppliers participating in the Medicare program. We believe it to be an important step forward in replacing the current flawed Competitive Bidding Program by substituting a market-based system so as not to interfere with patients' access to critical home medical equipment and services.

Homebound Medicare patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), i.e., emphysema and chronic bronchitis, and other pulmonary diseases require a diverse array of respiratory equipment. These medically complex respiratory patients frequently rely on the uninterrupted use of respiratory equipment in order to live or, at the very least, maintain their expected quality of life.

Medicare patients with pulmonary conditions must be assured of the safe and effective access and use of the appropriate medical equipment in their home. Therefore, it is imperative that adequate reimbursement be provided for key elements of furnishing home respiratory equipment, including:

- Patient and caregiver education, training, and support on the use of the equipment;
- Timely service in the event equipment is not functioning properly;
- Access to adequate backup equipment;
- Routine system operation verification and maintenance of equipment;
- Assessment of the home environment to determine proper equipment, and
- Evaluation of patient compliance with equipment use

Not recognizing, accounting, and providing for these key elements has the potential to compromise patient safety and quality of care. Respiratory therapists provide clinical care and services to pulmonary patients across the continuum of care and have the expertise to assure that Medicare pulmonary patients have access to these critical elements in their homes. While the majority of respiratory therapists work in the hospital setting, an increasing number are employed in alternative care sites such as nursing homes, physician offices, rehabilitation facilities and home care.

The current Competitive Bidding Program has resulted in unintended consequences whereby home care suppliers can no longer adequately provide the professional services necessary to carry out the above stated key elements.

HR 6490 will replace the current Competitive Bidding Program with a fair and equitable program based on sound economic principles that instills competition while maintaining beneficiary access to quality items and services. As advocates for pulmonary patients everywhere, AARC urges Congress to pass this important bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen J. Stewart".

Karen J. Stewart, MSc, RRT, FAARC  
President