

ISSUES

“Required Reading”

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As we enter September, I believe that a “back-to-school” theme is in order. Of course, once school is back in session, the first question is always: did you do the required reading? Luckily, it’s never too late to complete that task. The following are what I consider “required reading” for Congress, our regulatory agencies, and ACCC members heading into the fall of 2013 and beyond.

On the Legislative Front

Congress returned from its August recess with quite a bit of work on their plate, including passing a budget by the September 30 deadline, Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) reform, debt ceiling negotiations, and more. Here are a few of the documents our representatives must read to prepare themselves for these issues:

- Congressional Budget Office estimates on numerous budget plans—both ones with sequestration cuts and ones with alternatives in place. ACCC supports legislation eliminating cuts to Medicare and NIH due to the sequester, specifically HR 1416.
- Plans by specialty societies to eliminate the SGR formula and replace it with a system that rewards quality care.
- Letters and emails from constituents and advocates (like ACCC members) that address the impact of issues from sequestration to oral parity to chemotherapy teaching to specialty tiers.

On the Regulatory Front

September is an especially busy month for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid

Services (CMS), as comments on both the Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS) and the Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) rules are due. CMS will receive hundreds of comments that it must read before releasing the final rules in early November. These include:

- Comments from ACCC and other organizations on the specific concerns we have with the proposed rule.
- Testimony from ACCC to the Hospital Outpatient Payment (HOP) Panel requesting that CMS not implement certain changes, including changes to the E&M codes in the outpatient setting.
- An ACCC study that looks at the impact the E&M coding changes would have on community cancer centers across the country.
- Comments from state oncology societies, hospitals, and individual practitioners on both sets of proposed rules.

On the ACCC Front

ACCC members have required reading as well, including:

- ACCC White Papers. In 2013 ACCC began a new initiative called the Institute for the Future of Oncology. The Institute was launched because ACCC recognized a gap in knowledge and a need for meaningful discussion on issues unique to the multidisciplinary community oncology team. ACCC’s Institute will serve as a clearinghouse of information and knowledge that will address these issues and offer solutions that can be utilized across the community oncology continuum. After holding an initial

forum in June, the Institute will release two white papers, “Opportunities and New Realities in Cancer Care” and “Cancer Care in the Age of Electronic Health Information Exchange.” Both will be available online at www.accc-cancer.org/institute.

- Comments on the proposed CMS rules. ACCC submitted comments to CMS, highlighting the concerns our members have if certain aspects of the proposed rules were to be finalized. (Our comments are available online at: www.accc-cancer.org).
- The agenda for ACCC’s 30th National Oncology Conference. If you have not already done so, take a look at the upcoming program for ACCC’s meeting in Boston, Oct. 2-5. In addition to ACCC’s 2013 Innovator Award Winner presentations, the agenda is filled with practical sessions that can help your cancer program thrive. It’s not too late to register, so go to www.accc-cancer/oncologyconference.

While this list seems daunting, ACCC is here to help its members, CMS, and Congress through this “required reading.” ACCC staff will be meeting with CMS staff, visiting Capitol Hill, and communicating with ACCC members via meetings, newsletters, and ACCCExchange.

If you have any suggestions for additions to the “required reading” list, I’d love to hear from you at mfarber@accc-cancer.org.