

Oklahoma seniors face imminent Medicare physician access crisis: Congress must act now

- Oklahoma seniors can face significant challenges obtaining access to physicians. These challenges will get much worse unless Congress acts very soon to prevent steep cuts in Medicare payment rates. At just 13 practicing physicians per 1,000 Medicare beneficiaries, Oklahoma is well below the national average. Fifteen percent of Oklahoma residents is living in a primary care shortage area, and 30 percent of the state's Medicare beneficiaries are living below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.
- On January 1, 2012, Oklahoma Medicare physician services face an across-the-board pay cut of 27 percent, due to a flawed payment formula, the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR), created by Congress.
- Congress needs to avert these cuts and begin working toward a long-term solution that will eliminate this annual crisis. During the 12 months from January through December, 2012, SGR legislation would prevent a loss of \$260 million for the care of elderly and disabled patients in Oklahoma.
- 31,552 employees of medical practices, 597,248 Medicare patients and 167,430 Tricare patients in Oklahoma will be helped by the legislation that averts these cuts.
- Compared to the rest of the country, Oklahoma, at 16 percent, has an above-average proportion of Medicare patients.
- 47 percent of Oklahoma's practicing physicians are over 50, an age at which surveys have shown many physicians consider reducing their patient care activities.

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