APTA Letter to the Editor Template: Fee Schedule 8%

Use this template “Letter to the Editor” to send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper opposing the estimated 8% cut to Medicare Part B reimbursement in 2021 for physical therapist services. A letter to the editor allows you to contribute to the public debate on important matters and reach a large audience. Your local newspaper(s) will have guidelines on letter submissions and where to submit your letter. Remove this text box to get started

Insert the applicable information in brackets at the end of the piece and customize the body of this OpEd to suit your needs and submit to your local paper or another publication. Please be sure to tailor your letter to the specific word count and any other OpEd requirements or guidelines of the publication to which you are submitting it.

**REMINDER**: Delete these submission instructions and any other bracketed language below prior to submitting your letter.

**Now Is Not the Time to Limit Access to Critical Therapies.**

Leaving the hospital after battling to survive COIVD-19 is by no means the end of the road to recovery. All signs point to the coronavirus pandemic leaving in its wake hundreds of thousands of patients who have significant rehabilitation needs.

Numerous COVID-19 patients found themselves in intensive care, many on ventilators. Other patients, including previously healthy individuals under the age of 60, experienced the double whammy of COVID-19 and a stroke. Many patients face serious ongoing struggles due to post-intensive care syndrome. PICS can manifest in a variety of ways, including muscle weakness.

As the COVID-19 pandemic exploded, physical therapists were involved in critical roles on the front lines, helping patients fight the disease, regain mobility, and recover. And, while COVID-19 presents a new challenge, physical therapists who specialize in the treatment of patients with cardiopulmonary (heart and lung) issues are no strangers to the ICU team, having long practiced in these settings to provide care to the most critically ill.

Easy access to critical physical therapist care after hospitalization is essential for these patients to regain their health and independence. But there is a looming cliff on the horizon. It comes in the form of deep cuts to Medicare for 36 health care providers, scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2021, with physical therapists slated to take an 8% cut.

Clearly, the financial impact of the national health emergency caused by the pandemic has been swift and is felt across every sector of the health care provider community. By following federal guidelines aimed at mitigating the transmission of the coronavirus, physical therapists in community-based outpatient clinics are seeing few, if any, patients and thus are struggling to meet short-term obligations, such as payroll and rent, and are making painful decisions to furlough staff. At the same time, physical therapists are preparing for the expected surge in survivors who need care. As states move to reopen their economies, this next phase of the pandemic is no time to make it more difficult for patients to access physical therapy. But that’s exactly what will happen if the proposed cuts to physical therapist services are not stopped.

As Congress begins work on the next COVID-19 relief package, it is imperative that they look at long-term strategies to provide economic recovery, stabilize the health care system, and ensure patient access to care, particularly for those who will need physical therapist services as part of their recovery from COVID-19. Congress should include the legislative proposal supported by more than 60 national health care organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Physical Therapy Association, that will stop these cuts to the Medicare fee schedule. This much-needed action will provide a critical reprieve for a broad scope of health care providers who otherwise may not be able to serve patients who have lingering functional, mental, and mobility issues.

Let’s not allow cuts to health care to block the road to recovery. Join me in asking Congress to support this proposal for inclusion in COVID-19 Phase 4 legislation that will help heal the country and the patients we serve.

[Insert Your Name and Credentials Here]