

American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians®
Society of Interventional Pain Management Surgery Centers
"The Voice of Interventional Pain Management"

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May 5, 2020

Honorable Secretary Alex Azar II
Secretary of HHS
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
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Washington, D.C. 20201
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Honorable Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan
Deputy Secretary of HHS
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
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RE: Thank you from ASIPP and chronic pain patients

Dear Honorable Secretary Azar and Deputy Secretary Hargan:

On behalf of the American Society of Interventional Pain Physicians (ASIPP), 50 state societies of interventional pain physicians, Society of Interventional Pain Management Surgery Centers (SIPMS), interventional pain management centers and pain physicians across the country, more importantly, millions of chronic pain patients, and finally the entire physician community and American public, we would like to commend your leadership on multiple issues.

First, we applaud the decision to increase payments for audio only services. This will help millions of chronic pain patients who cannot afford video option.

We also applaud your decision to extend the repayment options for Medicare Advancement program. We hope to hear from you soon since we are waiting on a legal opinion. However, we continue to face multiple issues. [April 8 Response Letter From CMS](#)

1. Our request for extension of audio only services to August 6 has not been addressed. We would appreciate any assistance in this matter. [April 9 letter to Alex Azar and Eric Hargan](#)

Please extend the same option to all governmental agencies and all private insurers.

2. Termination of advancement program. Many of the practices were unable to use this option because of the paperwork glitches produced by some Medicare advisory contractors. They had different requirements for each. The requirements were variable for each MAC. Consequently, many of us, including the multiple board members of ASIPP and SIPMS, missed applications. This happened

mostly with WPS, whereas CGS and NGS were extremely prompt. Others have released. The majority of the problems were experienced in WPS jurisdiction. We are hoping that the program will be reopened, or at least the applications filed by 4/30 will be considered rather than stopping it on 4/26.

3. We also request you to consider our previous letter on April 9, 2020. There has been significant concern on behalf of members of the Congress for audits and investigations by not only governmental insurers, but mainly private insurers who are flying without any resistance:

These audits and investigations have been onerous. As stated in our previous letter, a number of physicians have been denied funding. Further, it also appears that many of them do not have any merit and also stop their payments without even giving an opportunity. [April 9 letter to Alex Azar and Eric Hargan](#)

Recently, it also has come to our attention that these investigations are conducted mostly on minorities, including Asian Indians. These audits and investigations are getting out of control even during COVID-19. At this time, a permanent solution is required, at the least these investigations must be stopped through August 6, so that physicians can take a breather. At the same time, physicians who are under “so called” investigations, must receive funding, specifically if they filed their applications before 4/30.

Thank you again for your assistance and concern about patient access care, as well as prevention of COVID-19.

Laxmaiah Manchikanti, MD

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