
OCC Advocacy News

October 2017 Newsletter of the Obesity Care Continuum

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Latest Senate Effort to Repeal ACA Comes Up Short

Following the defection of Republican Senators Rand Paul (R-KY), John McCain (R-AZ) and Susan Collins (R-ME) on healthcare reform, GOP leaders announced that the Senate would not proceed to a vote on “Graham/Cassidy” – the final effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Given the failure to pass Graham/Cassidy prior to September 30th and the expiration of special reconciliation rules, Senate Republicans will now need at least 60 votes to proceed to consider future ACA repeal and replace legislation.

During the last six months, the Obesity Care Continuum (OCC) has repeatedly reached out to lawmakers on Capitol Hill to educate Members about the OCC’s Healthcare Reform Principles. In these communications, OCC urged Congress to utilize a bipartisan approach toward reform – one that ensures both that patients can access all kinds of obesity treatment like counseling, drugs and surgery and that those with obesity are not denied coverage or charged more for their treatment than those with other types of chronic disease.

OCC will continue to work with Congress – especially the Senate HELP Committee, which could be resuming bipartisan hearings to identify avenues for stabilizing the individual health insurance market.

OCAN Leaders Participate in Novo Nordisk Advocacy Day

On September 27, 2017, health policy staff from many of the member groups of the Obesity Care Advocacy Network (OCAN) helped support a massive advocacy effort by Novo Nordisk, Inc. to raise awareness and garner support for S 830/HR 1953 and S Res. 63/ H Res. 142 – the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA) and the National Obesity Care Week (NOCW) congressional resolutions, respectively.

OCAN members assisted Novo Nordisk public affairs staff in educating and preparing more than 350 Novo Nordisk Obesity Care Specialists (OCS) and

patient ambassadors who had come from around the country to Washington, DC for Novo Nordisk's national advocacy day. Their mission: to personally meet with as many of the legislators from their state's congressional delegation to educate these individuals and their staff about the critical need for passage of both TROA and the NOCW congressional resolutions. At the end of the day, nearly 500 offices had been made aware of the strong support for these two legislative initiatives!

The September 27th advocacy day was the first time that hundreds of Obesity Care Specialists engaged Congress on this issue. As an OCS, their job is to educate physicians and other healthcare professionals about FDA-approved anti-obesity agents and the profound impact these drugs can have on the overall health of individuals affected by overweight or obesity. In this capacity, they witness first-hand the daily struggle that many healthcare professionals face when trying to help their patients address this complex and chronic disease. Their combined stories illustrate a country-wide patchwork of coverage policies, which is adversely affecting millions of Americans who should have access to the full continuum of science-based treatment services for obesity – including pharmacotherapy.

Update on Treat and Reduce Obesity Act

Support continues to grow for S 830/HR 1953, the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA) of 2017, which was introduced by Senators Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and Tom Carper (D-DE) and Representatives Erik Paulsen (R-MN) and Ron Kind (D-WI), respectively. At the time of this report, the bill had 110 cosponsors in the House and 9 in the Senate.

This critical legislation will provide Medicare beneficiaries with additional treatment tools to help seniors address their overweight and obesity. Specifically, TROA will provide the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) with the authority to expand the Medicare benefit for intensive behavioral counseling by allowing additional types of healthcare providers to offer these services. The legislation would also allow CMS to expand Medicare Part D to provide coverage of FDA-approved prescription drugs for chronic weight management.

Update on National Obesity Care Week

OCC continues to urge legislators to support and cosponsor S. Res. 63/H. Res. 142, a congressional resolution, which would proclaim the week of October 29 through November 4, 2017, as National Obesity Care Week (NOCW). At the time of this report, there were 22 cosponsors in the House and 1 cosponsor in the Senate.

USP Seeks Public Comment on New Drug Classification System and a New Anti-Obesity Agent Category

On September 25, 2017, the United States Pharmacopeia announced a second round of public comments on its new draft Drug Classification (USP-DC) – an independent drug classification system currently under development by the USP Healthcare Quality & Safety Expert Committee. The USP DC is designed to address stakeholder needs emerging from the extended use of the USP Medicare Model Guidelines (USP MMG) beyond the Medicare Part D benefit.

Over the past ten years, the USP MMG has been adopted in other health policy settings outside of its intended Medicare utilization. Through this extension of use, public comment and stakeholder feedback has identified the need to create a an independent classification system that can provide a more comprehensive inclusion of outpatient drugs, more frequent revisions, and more detailed mapping tools for implementation.

The USP DC is intended to be complementary to the USP MMG and is developed with similar guiding principles, taxonomy, and structure of the USP Categories and Classes. The added benefits include:

- USP Categories and Classes will be assigned to common outpatient drugs available in the US market, extending beyond Medicare Part D eligibility
- Non-Medicare stakeholders will be able to provide public comment on the USP Categories and Classes
- Annual revision of mapping tools will provide more timely alignment of US drugs to USP Categories and Classes
- Flexibility to propose additional features in the system, beyond USP Categories and Classes, to meet evolving stakeholders utilization of the classification system

The OCC will be submitting comments to the USP regarding the new Drug Classification, which continues to include a new class for anti-obesity agents as well as recognition of new combination agents such as Natrexone/Bupropion (Contrave) and Phentermine/Topiramate (Qsymia).

For more information about the USP-DC and how to comment between September 25 and October 30, 2017, please click below:

<https://www.usp.org/health-quality-safety/usp-drug-classification-system>