



Support Access to High Quality Women's Health Services

Position:

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) strongly supports the “**Midwifery Care Access and Reimbursement Equity Act,**” (H.R.1101/S.662) as introduced by Representative Ed Towns (D-NY) and Representative Fred Upton (R-MI) in the U.S. House of Representatives on February 13, 2009, and by Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND) and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) in the U.S. Senate on March 19, 2009. This legislation would provide for long overdue adjustments to reimbursement for services provided to Medicare beneficiaries by certified nurse-midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs).

Midwifery practice, as conducted by CNMs and CMs, is the independent management of women's health care focusing particularly on pregnancy, childbirth, the postpartum period, care of the newborn, and the family planning and gynecological needs of women. The CNM and CM practice within a health care system that provides for consultation, collaborative management, or referral as indicated by the health status of the client. CNMs and CMs both practice in accord with the *Standards for the Practice of Midwifery*, as defined by the ACNM.

Specifically, **H.R.1101/S.662** would:

- ✓ Establish equitable reimbursement for obstetrical and gynecological services provided by CNMs/CMs to ensure greater access to these essential services.
- ✓ Establish recognition for the certified midwife (CM) to provide services under Medicare, as legally authorized by state law.

Background:

Inequitable Reimbursement for Women's Health Services

Since 1988, CNMs have been authorized to provide maternity-related services to Medicare-eligible women who are of childbearing age. Approximately 3 million disabled women are Medicare-eligible beneficiaries. Reimbursement for CNMs was established at 65% of what a physician receives for a similar service.

As of 1993, CNMs were also authorized to provide services outside the maternity cycle. Medicare reimburses CNMs for primary care and well woman services provided to senior women covered by the program.

In June 2002, the Medicare Payment Advisory Committee (MedPAC) issued a report titled “Medicare Payment to Advanced Practice Nurses and Physician Assistants.” In a 14-0 vote, MedPAC recommended to Congress that the percentage of Part B reimbursement for CNM services be increased. This was the sole recommendation in the report. In its recommendation to Congress, MedPAC reported that,

“...research studies show quality and outcomes of care [provided by CNMs] at least comparable to obstetricians and gynecologists.”¹

In August 2007, the House of Representatives passed the Children’s Health and Medicare Protection Act (CHAMP). Included in the bill was a provision to remedy the inequity of midwifery reimbursement under Medicare. CBO scored the provision as having no cost. Unfortunately, the Senate failed to act on the measure.

Finally, ACNM feels Congress should take its lead from the states on this issue. Currently, a majority of the states reimburse CNMs/CMs for services provided to their citizens under Medicaid at 100% of what physician providers receive. The time has come for Medicare to provide equitable reimbursement in this area as well.

Recognition of the Certified Midwife (CM)

A CNM is educated in the two disciplines of nursing and midwifery. A CM is educated in the discipline of midwifery. Both are required to possess evidence of certification according to the requirements of the ACNM and the American Maternity Certification Board. While services provided by CNMs are reimbursed within both Medicare and Medicaid, CMs are not presently recognized under either program. **H.R.1101/S.662** would establish CMs authority to provide services within the Medicare program in states where they are licensed to practice.

Please support enactment of these overdue changes to the Medicare program so that all women, including those with disabilities, have appropriate access to health professionals of their choosing. In the House, please contact Dr. Kahlil Johnson in Rep. Towns’ office at (202) 226-9457 or via email at Kahlil.johnson@mail.house.gov to cosponsor H.R.1101. In the Senate, please contact Mr. Tom Mahr in Senator Conrad’s office at (202) 224-2043 or via email at Tom_Mahr@Conrad.senate.gov to cosponsor **S.662**.

Please feel free to contact Patrick Cooney, ACNM’s Federal Relations Representative, at (202) 347-0034 or via email at patrick@federalgrp.com with any questions you might have regarding this issue.

The mission of ACNM is to promote the health and well-being of women and infants within their families and communities through the development and support of the profession of midwifery as practiced by certified nurse-midwives, and certified midwives.

Last updated May 13, 2009

¹ Medicare Payment Advisory Committee, “Medicare Payment to Advanced Practice Nurses and Physician Assistants,” June 2002, page 13.