

MEDICARE COVERAGE OF AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

ACTION

Request your members of Congress to support the Medicare Audiology Services Enhancement Act of 2017. [S. TBD/H.R. TBD]

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Currently, Medicare only covers diagnostic tests performed by audiologists to assess hearing and balance. Under the proposed legislation, covered services provided by audiologists would be expanded to include auditory treatment and vestibular treatment. In addition, the proposal would allow a payment of intraoperative neurophysiologic monitoring (IONM) when performed by audiologists in the hospital inpatient setting.

WHAT YOU NEED TO SAY?

- Untreated hearing loss can lead to depression, anxiety, and emotional instability.*
- Comprehensive coverage for audiologic treatment services—provided by audiologists—will enable Medicare beneficiaries to enjoy greater access to services that address their hearing and balance-related health care needs.
- This legislation applies to services that are currently covered under the Medicare program and that are within an audiologist’s scope of practice (as allowed by state licensure) and would not add any new services to the Medicare program.
- In June 2016, the National Academy of Sciences issued a report, “Hearing Health Care for Adults: Priorities for Improving Access and Affordability,” which recommended Medicare coverage of audiology services.
- As Medicare moves to alternative payment models—where reimbursement is based on patient outcomes—it will become more difficult for audiologists to receive full reimbursement under value-based purchasing if they are not recognized to both diagnose and treat patients.
- By recognizing audiologists as providers of both diagnostic and audiologic treatment services, it will offer better reporting and measurement of the value of audiology services for Medicare beneficiaries with hearing health care needs.
- The cost associated with this legislation would have a nominal impact on the overall spending for Medicare. An independent cost estimate found that the proposed changes would increase fiscal year outlays by less than \$7 million over the 5-year budget period and less than \$18 million over 10-years.

* Hearing-impaired adults are at increased risk of experiencing emotional distress and social engagement restrictions five years later. Oxford Academic. May 16, 2012. Retrieved from: <https://academic.oup.com/ageing/article/41/5/618/47025/Hearing-impaired-adults-are-at-increased-risk-of>.

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