

To: Members of the Senate Medicaid Committee

Fr: Tim Maglione, JD, Senior Director, Ohio State Medical Association

Da: October 21, 2015

Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 10

On behalf of the 20,000 physician, resident and medical student members of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), we write in strong support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 10, a resolution that calls on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to immediately revise their patient satisfaction survey measures to better address the topic of pain management.

State policymakers and stakeholders, including the OSMA, have made real progress in combating Ohio's epidemic of prescription drug abuse, misuse, and diversion. We have worked together to address this issue from multiple angles, and the legislation, regulations, guidelines, and educational campaigns that have been put into place are making a difference.

One piece of the puzzle we have not yet been able to tackle relates to patient satisfaction surveys about pain management. Currently, Medicare patients who visit a hospital are asked to provide feedback on their clinical experiences through the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey, which is administered by CMS. This survey includes two questions about pain management¹. If patients indicate they needed medication to control pain during their hospital stay, they are asked:

“During this hospital stay, how often was your pain well controlled?”
Answer options include: Never, Sometimes, Usually, Often.

“During this hospital stay, how often did the hospital staff do everything they could to help you with your pain?”
Answer options include: Never, Sometimes, Usually, Often.

The results of HCAHPS surveys are tied directly to Medicare reimbursement – essentially, low HCAHPS scores will result in lower payment for hospitals and clinicians, and higher HCAHPS scores will result in higher payment. Because HCAHPS questions ask about pain management, clinicians have a financial incentive to adequately treat their patients' pain. In theory, this is a good idea: clinicians should responsibly control patients' pain, and they should help patients have reasonable

¹ 2014 HCHAPS Survey Instrument Questions 13 and 14, March 2014, available at <http://www.hcahpsonline.org/>

expectations regarding pain management. In practice, however, clinicians have difficulty managing patient expectations about pain control and may feel the need to prescribe more pain medication than is clinically necessary to obtain satisfactory HCAHPS results.

In 2013, the OSMA conducted a survey of 1,100 Ohio physicians, and we found that 74 percent of physicians believe that HCAHPS survey measures add to the problem of overprescribing pain medications and may be fueling the prescription drug abuse epidemic. The OSMA believes health care professionals should be reimbursed for delivering high quality care – especially in the area of pain management. Sometimes, the best, most responsible care may be to *not* administer pain medications.

Although there are few options available at the state level to address this problem, we believe this issue must be quickly fixed. We commend Senator Eklund for introducing SCR 10 to do the following:

1. To call on the CMS to immediately revise the HCAHPS survey measures to better address the topic of pain management and to implement these changes with all due haste.
2. To support the efforts of those involved in drug abuse research, education, community outreach, and prevention in order to build an environment in which alternatives to opiates are available.

Our organization strongly supports SCR 10, and we hope to see prompt federal action on this issue. Thank you for considering the OSMA's views on this resolution, and please contact me at any time with questions about this topic.

Sincerely,



Tim Maglione, JD
Senior Director of Government Relations