

THE COALITION TO PRESERVE PATIENT ACCESS TO PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

Press conference: “CMS: Compromised Quality of Patient Care” Testimony from: Helen Error, 85-year-old Lymphedema Patient

Representatives from The Coalition to Preserve Patient Access to Physical Medicine and
Rehabilitation Services to Urge Congress to Overturn New CMS Rule
November 16, 2005

The Rayburn Building, Room 2257, Washington, D.C.

- I'm an 85-year-old woman who first experienced lymphedema after a hysterectomy in 1992. My leg began to swell and I went to a specialist to get appropriate care. I literally traveled from state to state – North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland – and finally found a clinic in Ellicott, City MD. It took time, money and energy to get the care I needed. That was critically for my health and well being. And, I've learned that if I don't get appropriate care it can lead to secondary conditions.
- I also suffer from cellulites as a result of my lymphedema. I've been hospitalized for this and take antibiotics to heal properly. Cellulites can be pretty terrible and even life threatening. It's a condition where the skin breaks out in raised red blotches.
- I've now found a clinic less than an hour from my home with Dr. Erlichman. I go for monthly treatments and I can't do without them. If I don't go the lymphedema can potentially take over my body. Since the condition is not curable, I am diligent about my care. I receive a special massage, draining and wrapping of the leg. I depend on my specialists in the clinic to provide my care. They are well trained and provide great quality of care.
- I recently wrote to Senator Paul Sarbones (MD) giving him a rundown on Lymphedema and the importance of proper care. If we have to go and pay for treatment independently or travel a great distance to receive it, I'm afraid many people on Medicare just won't to or won't be able to afford it.
- Medicare has already started to take away some of the reimbursements I've received for my condition. This needs to stop and the special care needs to continue. It could literally save my life.
- On another note, I don't take much prescription drugs so the new Medicare prescription drug plan is of no value to me. This therapy and treatment is a value. If I had to choose between this therapy and drugs, I would choose this therapy.

Helen Error speaking on behalf of the Coalition to Preserve Patient Access to Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Services, Nov. 16, 2005