**OSR Legislative Affairs Update October 31, 2011**

 **1.  AMA Relative Value Scale Update Committee (RUC) Calls on Medicare to Pay for Coordination Services**The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services announced it would address concerns regarding payment for care provided to patients with chronic diseases.  The CMS was especially interested in addressing the issue for primary care physicians.  The AMA RVS Update Committee has called on the CMS to begin paying for:  Anticoagulant management, education and training for patient self management, Medical team conferences, and telephone services.  The CMS’s response to these recommendations from the RUC and comments from specialty societies is anticipated in the 2012 Medicare Physician Payment Schedule final rule, which is expected to be released November 1.  [AMA](http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/news/newsletters-journals/hsr-insight-archive/october-2011/20oct2011.page).

**2.  Super Committee Discusses Discretionary Spending**On October 26, the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction hosted a hearing examining defense and non-defense discretionary spending.  The hearing had many presentations that echoed earlier proposals for the committee to take a balanced approach to deficit reduction.  The committee looked at both the democrat and republican strategies for deficit reduction, and made inquiries into the budgetary impact of increasing revenues through tax reform coupled with spending cuts.  The CBO needs the super committee’s proposal by early November, and its fourth public hearing will be held on November 1st to review proposals released to date by various deficit reduction commissions.  [AAMC](https://www.aamc.org/advocacy/washhigh/).

**3.  President Announces Student Loan Reform**On October 25, President Obama announced changes to federal student loan repayment and consolidation programs designed to “increase college affordability by making it easier to manage student loan debt.”  The proposal would limit monthly loan payments to 10% of discretionary income for about 1.6 million borrowers.  The President also announced a new temporary Special Direct Consolidation Loan.  The new loan will be available to students if they have at least one FFEL loan, as well as one Direct loan.  [AAMC](https://www.aamc.org/advocacy/washhigh/).

**4.  NIH Discusses Financial Challenges of Medical Research**National Institutes of Health Director Dr. Francis Collins said that the agency, research institutions, and individual grantees must work together to develop options to respond to the budget challenges facing medical research.  While major medical breakthroughs with profound implications for human health seem to be within reach of the research community, there has never been a time with more financial stress.  Dr. Collins said the NIH will have to choose its priorities carefully and scale back some activities to support new initiatives.  Some of the NIH’s priorities for FY 2013 will be:  basic research, discovery through technology, translational science advancement, and encouraging new investigators and ideas.  [AAMC NIH](https://www.aamc.org/advocacy/washhigh/).

**5.  FREE Online Advocacy Course**The Society of Teachers of Family Medicine allows free access to an online introductory course to health care advocacy.  While the course is directed towards the family medicine profession, the suggestions for how to contact and speak to representatives can be applied to any situation.  [Advocacy Course](http://www.stfm.org/advocacy/course.cfm)

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