

HEATHER WILSON  
1ST DISTRICT, NEW MEXICO

ENERGY AND COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEE:  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
AND THE INTERNET  
HEALTH

ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY  
ENVIRONMENT AND  
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE:  
STRATEGIC FORCES  
MILITARY READINESS

Dr. Paul R. Duncan M.D.  
New Mexico Society of Clinical Oncology  
7770 Jefferson Street Northeast, Suite 400  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3101

July 6, 2005

318 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3101  
(202) 225-6318  
Fax: (202) 725-4975

20 FIRST PLAZA, NW  
SUITE 603  
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87102  
(505) 346-6741  
Fax: (505) 346-6723  
<http://www.house.gov/Wilson>

Dear Dr. Duncan,

Thank you for your letter about House Resolution 261.

House Resolution 261 would urge the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to extend the Cancer Care Demonstration Project through at least 2006. CMS established the Cancer Care Demonstration Project after concerns were voiced by Members of Congress, professional oncologist organizations, and patient advocacy organizations about the effects on access to cancer care resulting from the new Average Sales Price payment formula for outpatient administered drugs in Medicare. In exchange for submitting data on levels of patient nausea and vomiting, pain, and fatigue, Medicare reimburses oncologists \$130 per patient per encounter. This allows CMS to collect important data used to determine the effectiveness of cancer treatment while helping oncologists continue to provide quality cancer care in the outpatient setting while the impact of the new ASP + 6% payment methodology is studied.

I have reviewed House Resolution 261 and I've decided to become a cosponsor. Thank you for letting me know that this legislation is important to oncologists and cancer patients in New Mexico. Since the final reports on the impact of the new ASP + 6% formula are due in January 2006, extending the Cancer Care Demonstration Project through 2006 would stabilize payments to oncologists while giving CMS and Congress more time to fully digest the results of the reports and understand the effects of the new formula. The Cancer Care Demonstration Project, along with temporary transitional payments, have tempered the reductions in drug reimbursement since the implementation of the new ASP + 6% formula. While Medicare was clearly overpaying for drugs under Average Wholesale Price, it was not our intention to reimburse oncologists below cost for total cancer care. Drug acquisition cost to oncologists under ASP + 6% should be fully studied in practice to ensure that oncologists can in fact purchase chemotherapy regimens at this price.

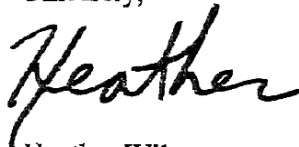
Access to quality cancer treatment for the 6,900 people in New Mexico diagnosed with cancer each year is important to me. Measuring side-effects of cancer treatment such as nausea, pain, and fatigue as this demonstration docs may help reduce overall cancer costs by avoiding hospitalizations and complications. I support the Cancer Care Demonstration Project as a

temporary measure until the effects of the new payment system have been fully examined. I will continue to monitor this to ensure that access to cancer care for New Mexicans is not compromised.

Dr. Duncan, I also read an article from Healthcare News recently which gave me pause. I have enclosed it here and wonder what you think of the points made. I would be interested in your views.

Again, thank you for contacting me. Please continue to contact me about issues that are important to you. While I commute from my home in Albuquerque to Washington D.C., for voting and committee hearings, you can always check my web site for upcoming community events to find where you can catch me around town.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heather Wilson  
Member of Congress

HW: jm

P.S. You can get current news from Congress every week **FREE** by signing up at <http://www.house.gov/wilson> for our e-newsletter.