

NEWS RELEASE

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APA Supports Sen. Specter's Amendment to Delay the Elimination of Consultation Codes

ARLINGTON, Va. (Dec. 15, 2009) – The American Psychiatric Association thanks Senator Arlen Specter, D-Pa., for introducing an amendment to *The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* (H.R. 3590). The amendment delays, for one year, the implementation of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) decision to eliminate the use of consultation codes. Currently, the elimination will occur on January 1, 2010.

Physicians often request psychiatric consults for the most medically complex patients. Some of these patients may be on as many as 15 daily medications and live with multiple co-morbid physical/mental ailments. Consultations are a critical component to care coordination and a means to efficiently deliver health care services to reduce health care costs.

A letter signed by the APA and 20 other physician organizations explained that the "CMS' decision to eliminate codes for consultation will be detrimental to Medicare patients and providers because it will be implemented with little guidance to physicians, is inconsistent with efforts to promote coordinated care (for patients), and minimizes the effort involved in (physician) consultation."

"This one-year delay is imperative to psychiatrists, who treat patients with complex and difficult-to-treat disorders and need consultation appointments in order to properly diagnose and help their patients recover," said APA CEO and Medical Director James H. Scully, Jr., M.D. "It's important that these coding changes are implemented with more time to incorporate comments from our nation's physicians, allowing the code structure to meet their needs and the needs of their patients."

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose 38,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

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