

American College of Surgeons (ACS)

Adequate payment for providers based on the unique characteristics of each specialty

Organization Description: ACS is a scientific and educational association of surgeons that aims to improve the quality of care for surgical patients by setting high standards for surgical education and practice. The College has numerous committees that study particular aspects of surgery and make recommendations for improvement in these areas. There are 65 chapters in the United States, two in Canada, three in Mexico, and 30 in other countries around the world.

Proposal Summary: ACS supports an incremental approach to achieving universal coverage over the next 10 years. ACS maintains that the most effective way to implement some features of universal coverage is on a state-by-state basis. ACS also believes pay-for-performance measurements should be defined on a specialty-specific level and supports the promulgation of health information technology. In addition to their own proposal, ACS has joined the Physician Coalition¹ to promote principles to reform the U.S. health care system.

- **Coverage:** ACS has a brief statement of the organizations' principles for expanding coverage, but it does not offer specific recommendations for how to achieve these principles. ACS supports moving toward universal access to care within the current pluralistic health care system. Universal coverage should be achieved within the next decade, with some features being implemented on a state-by-state basis according to local priorities and needs. The Physician Coalition supports affordable health care coverage for all U.S. residents, including catastrophic coverage.
- **Quality:** ACS supports continuously advancing evidence-based care, but has concerns about a pay-for-performance framework in Medicare. If a Medicare pay-for-performance system is implemented, ACS believes it is necessary to incorporate more complex specialty and service-specific measures to ensure broad applicability and participation across specialties.
 - ACS proposes a three-phase approach to implementing pay-for-performance. Phase 1 is pay-for-reporting, which rewards physicians for self-reporting data of compliance with accepted surgical quality standards (e.g., confirmation of operative site and side or pre-operative time-out). Phase 2 would begin to measure how surgeons meet goals for process measures shown to reduce risks related to surgery. Phase 3 would pay for improved patient outcomes. This would require improved data reporting and case-mix adjustment at the specialty level. All pay-for-performance mechanisms should be voluntary for physicians.

The Physician Coalition's reform principles emphasize the need for better health care quality and research to deliver care in a safe and cost-effective manner.

- **Health Information Technology (IT):** Supports greater investment in, and promulgation of, information technology to improve the effectiveness, quality and safety of patient care. The Physician Coalition seeks sufficient funding to build a comprehensive infrastructure and implementation scheme for health IT.

¹The Physician Coalition represents ten of the nation's leading physician associations, which form a united voice for doctors in the national policy debate.

- *Cost:* Use health information technology, instead of rationing care, as a means to increase efficiency and contain costs. The Physician Coalition's proposal emphasizes that the responsibility of funding universal health care is a cooperative effort between the private and public arenas. It also seeks to limit expenditures through better health care management and administrative simplification.
- *Other:* ACS focuses on patient access to surgical care and Medicare payment reform issues. ASC seeks to ensure appropriate Medicare reimbursement and quality standards for surgical procedures performed in non-hospital settings, such as ambulatory surgery centers and physician offices.

Proposal Date: 2005-2007

Sources: ACS Web site – ACS Views on Legislative, Regulatory and Other Issues, <http://www.facs.org/ahp/views/views.html>; Physician Coalition: Principles for Reform of the US Health Care System, 2007, <http://www.aafp.org/online/en/home/membership/initiatives/hrsprinciples.html>.