

COA Advocates Assemble on Capitol Hill to Keep Middlemen Out of Health Care

Advocates from Across the Country Join the Community Oncology Alliance's Spring Hill Day to Speak with Members of Congress

WASHINGTON, D.C, UNITED STATES, May 8, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Medicare and the U.S. health care system are overwhelmed by middlemen such as pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and insurers. These entities prioritize profits over patient care by restricting access to treatments and delaying care for cancer and other serious diseases. This leads to increased health care spending, poor patient outcomes, and burnout among providers.

These challenges have inspired cancer care advocates to share their

experiences in Washington today on Capitol Hill for the spring Community Oncology Alliance (COA) and COA Patient Advocacy Network (CPAN) Hill Day. More than 50 advocates from 31 states representing every facet of the health care system, including patients, survivors and their family members, oncologists, hematologists, pharmacists and pharmacy team members, and practice administrators have come together to walk the halls of Congress.

COA and its advocates will hold over 200 meetings with members of Congress and their staff. Together, they seek to provide Congress with an eye-opening look at the impact of PBMs and insurers on patient care. Advocates will share their experiences and discuss the importance of supporting and advancing bills before Congress that empower patients and protect their right to timely and appropriate cancer care.

While on the Hill, community oncology advocates will be asking for three things from Congress:



Community Oncology Alliance Logo

1. Stop CMS' restrictions on the delivery of oral cancer medications, ensuring patients can receive their medications in a manner that best suits their needs. Support the Seniors' Access to Critical Medications Act (H.R. 5526, S. 3458).
2. Advance overdue PBM reform bills to curb PBM abuses and bad behavior. There are multiple, bipartisan, and important PBM reform bills this Congress must pass, including the Lower Costs, More Transparency Act (H.R. 5378), Modernizing and Ensuring PBM Accountability Act (S. 2973), and Neighborhood Options for Patients Buying Medicines (NO PBMs) Act (H.R. 5400, S. 2436).
3. Tackle insurer abuses by eliminating restrictive prior authorization and step therapy practices, especially within Medicare Advantage. Support the Safe Step Act (H.R. 2630, S. 652).

"Middlemen should not be allowed to stand in the way of patients accessing the best cancer care that their doctors recommend, at an affordable cost, and delivered in a setting that is convenient to them," says Miriam Atkins, MD, FACP, president of COA and practicing medical oncologist at AO Multispecialty Clinic in Augusta, GA. "All too often, middlemen, such as PBMs and insurers, delay, deny, and disrupt critically needed cancer treatment. This impact is felt across the cancer care continuum and throughout the patient journey. We must put an end to these daily struggles that patients face in getting the critical cancer treatments that they need."

While patient and practice advocates are in meetings, community oncologist David Eagle, MD will be testifying on the impact of regulatory burdens on small businesses in health care before a [full hearing](#) of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Small Business. A former president and current board member of COA, Dr. Eagle is a practicing medical oncologist and chair of legislative affairs and patient advocacy at New York Cancer & Blood Specialists. In his testimony, Dr. Eagle will share his story of being acquired by a large hospital system and the patient and economic impact of market consolidation in cancer care.

Spring Hill Day and Congressional testimony are just a few examples of the ongoing advocacy work COA and CPAN do throughout the year. To learn more about COA visit www.CommunityOncology.org and to get involved in CPAN visit www.COAAadvocacy.org.

About the Community Oncology Alliance

The Community Oncology Alliance (COA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for community oncology practices and, most importantly, the patients they serve. COA is the only organization dedicated solely to community oncology where the majority of Americans with cancer are treated. The mission of COA is to ensure that patients with cancer receive quality, affordable, and accessible cancer care in their own communities. Learn more about COA at www.communityoncology.org.

About the COA Patient Advocacy Network (CPAN)

The Community Oncology Alliance Patient Advocacy Network (CPAN) is a chapter-based national advocacy organization committed to raising awareness of independent, community cancer care centers and how national and local health care policy issues may affect patient care. CPAN

advocates include patients, survivors, caregivers, and members of the oncology care team who share personal stories so policymakers and the community can understand the importance of personalized, affordable cancer care close to where patients live and work. Sign up to become an advocate or find your local chapter at www.COAAadvocacy.org.

Drew Lovejoy
Community Oncology Alliance
info@coacancer.org

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