

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

AMA, MedPAC Clash At Specialty Hospital Hearings

Congress should end the moratorium on specialty hospitals, which stifles healthy competition, according to the **American Medical Association**.

AMA trustee **William Plested** testified May 24 to the **Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**. "Patients should continue to benefit from increased choice and competition that result from specialty hospitals," he insisted.

But the **Medicare Payment Advisory Commission's** Executive Director **Mark Miller** encouraged Congress to extend the current moratorium until Jan. 1, 2007. Testifying at the same hearing, the Commission said that prolonging the moratorium, which is due to expire on June 8, 2005, will allow Congress time to consider MedPAC's specialty hospital research and recommendations.

The hospital data available now only indicates specialty hospitals' emergence, which doesn't necessarily reflect what impact the hospitals will have in the future, MedPAC says. Congress must review more evidence before passing legislation to effectively shut specialty hospitals out of Medicare and Medicaid, the commission adds.

The AMA testimony is at www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/15118.html.

The MedPAC testimony is at www.medpac.gov/publications/congressional_testimony/20050524_TestimonySpecHosp.pdf.