

Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

Urge Congress To Listen To Its Advisors And Scrap 10 Percent Cut

If the **Medicare Payment Advisory Commission** (MedPAC) ran the world, you wouldn't have to worry about where next year's payment updates were coming from. The **Congressional Budget Office** warns that you face a 10 percent cut in your Part B payments for 2008 if Congress doesn't act. But meanwhile, MedPAC recommended that Congress give you a nice 1.7 percent pay hike next year.

The truth is, neither MedPAC's carrot nor the CBO's stick are likely to become law. But both numbers will influence the Democratic-controlled Congress as it debates options for yet another rescue mission.

In the long term, Congress needs to come up with a replacement for the system that keeps coming up with those steep pay cuts year after year. At its January 9-10 meeting, MedPAC debated its recommendations to Congress on a long-term fix, which are due March 1.

MedPAC commissioners couldn't agree on whether to scrap the current formula or tweak it with a different target.

Possibilities: Expand the formula to consider all Medicare spending, account for geographic differences in spending, or share savings with thrifty providers. MedPAC put off voting on these issues until next month.