

Eli's Rehab Report

NEWS BRIEF: Congress Extends Therapy Cap Exceptions Process

You can breathe a sigh of relief that Congress has decided to extend the therapy cap exceptions process beyond 2006.

Congress passed HR6111, the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006, which includes language to extend the therapy cap exceptions process for one year, as authorized by the Deficit Reduction Act. Even better, the act freezes the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule at 2006 levels, putting the scheduled 5.1 percent cut in the conversion factor on hold.

Final step: President Bush signed the legislation into law on Dec. 20, making it good to go.

In addition to freezing the fee schedule rate at 2006 levels, Congress also authorized a 1.5 percent bonus for eligible providers who report quality measures, according to the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA). "Because of outcomes measures developed by ASHA, speech-language pathologists (SLP) are specifically defined as eligible for the bonus beginning in 2008."

The legislation includes a one-year extension for CY 2007 of the minimum 1.0 floor in the Geographic Practice Cost Index (GPCI) under the fee schedule. "This reverses a scheduled reduction in payment to the 51 rural localities where the GPCI is below 1.0," according to the American Physical Therapy Association.