Compromising Patient Protections to Lower Drug Costs Could Harm People with Cancer

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For immediate release
November 27, 2018
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“While ASCO supports efforts to control drug prices, we are keenly aware that optimal cancer care requires patient access to the most medically appropriate drug, at the most opportune time, based on the highest quality evidence. Therefore, ASCO has significant concerns about the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ (CMS) proposed rule to reduce the number of prescription drugs that must be made available to Medicare beneficiaries with chronic, potentially life-threatening illnesses including cancer.

“Cancer drugs are currently a protected class under Medicare, and as such, beneficiaries are effectively guaranteed access to these treatments. CMS’ proposal, however, would weaken the current protections for cancer drugs and potentially create access issues for patients. In particular, provisions in the proposal that would allow step therapy and other potentially restrictive utilization management strategies could not only delay patient access to proper treatments, they could potentially lead to irreversible disease progression and other significant patient health risks.

“ASCO is dedicated to supporting efforts that lower the cost of prescription drugs and strengthen the nation’s healthcare delivery system, while preserving access to appropriate and optimal high-quality care. We are assessing CMS’ proposal and its likely impact on Americans with cancer and will submit constructive feedback during the open comment
period. We look forward to working with the agency on a sound solution for rising cancer care costs that does not limit access to optimal care.”

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**About ASCO:**

Founded in 1964, the American Society of Clinical Oncology, Inc. (ASCO®) is committed to making a world of difference in cancer care. As the world’s leading organization of its kind, ASCO represents nearly 45,000 oncology professionals who care for people living with cancer. Through research, education, and promotion of the highest-quality patient care, ASCO works to conquer cancer and create a world where cancer is prevented or cured, and every survivor is healthy. ASCO is supported by its affiliate organization, the Conquer Cancer Foundation. Learn more at [www.ASCO.org](http://www.ASCO.org), explore patient education resources at [www.Cancer.Net](http://www.Cancer.Net), and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.