

Medicare Fees – Hulsebus

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stand in stark comparison to the risk and error-related costs of medicine and drugs. While chiropractic spending nationally is a fraction of one-percent of total costs, medical and pharmaceutical errors total an estimated 17 percent of all health care costs, with out-right fraud draining an estimated additional \$60 billion from the program.

There should be no doubt, however, in spite of the compelling case for the expansion of chiropractic services and accessibility based on the profession's performance record, that as the deficits in Medicare Part B continue to mount and overall health care expenditures continue to spiral out of control, pressure on the system from organized medicine and the pharmaceutical industry will shift discussion and policy options in the direction of "essential" or "core" medical services. Legislation could be introduced in the US Congress to eliminate non-essential services and chiropractic might be on that list. The series of reports on chiropractic "errors" that have come from the Office of the Inspector General of CMS will certainly be used as additional fuel for restricting or eliminating Medicare beneficiaries. This is to the most obvious and draconian possibility. The

chiropractic profession needs to prepare for this possibility, and indeed, strive to preempt any such initiative. ICA is carefully watching this situation and will immediately alert the chiropractic profession to any proposed limitations for chiropractic in Medicare.

If 2009 was the year of national health care reform, the urgent necessities of a growing beneficiary population and shrinking Medicare resources will make 2010 the year of Medicare. We cannot afford to let our guard down for one minute.

Michael J. Hulsebus, DC has considerable experience with Medicare issues. A former regional director of the ICA Board of Directors, he has served on many ICA Committees and been actively involved in legislative issues at the state and national levels. In private practice in Rockford, Illinois, Dr. Hulsebus is a member of ICA's Medicare Committee.

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