

# Survey: Medicare Cuts to Cause 82% of Cancer Clinics to Cut Staff and Reduce or Stop Seeing Medicare Patients

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 1, 2010 /PRNewswire/ -- The Community Oncology Alliance (COA) announced results of a national survey of oncology practices, in which 82% are likely to reduce or stop seeing Medicare patients and cut clinical or operational staff -- including oncologists in 4 out of 10 practices -- if Medicare cuts currently scheduled for January 1, 2011 go into effect. In addition, 67% of practices report they are likely to terminate private pay contracts tied to Medicare and 58% to close some of their facilities as a result of the planned cuts.

The survey is based on the responses of 426 community oncology practices, representing 2,353 oncologists. The survey was conducted October to November, 2010.

"The scheduled Medicare cuts would be an absolute disaster for cancer patients across the nation," said Ted Okon, executive director of COA. "Clearly, short-term 'patches' -- of which we had five during the past twelve months -- are not working. Patients are concerned about their access to care, and physicians are concerned that participation in Medicare could become a financial impossibility. At the very least Congress needs to pass a 12-month patch to allow sufficient time to craft a permanent solution."

Dr. David Eagle, president of COA, added, "Although the U.S. has the best cancer care delivery system in the world, the system is at high risk as Medicare has substantially cut payments for cancer drugs and essential services. Oncologists already spend far too much time dealing with patient financial issues, including trying to navigate the insurance maze and identify drug and co-payment assistance for patients in need. Community cancer clinics have already closed satellite facilities and cut staff, and the survey shows that this disastrous trend will accelerate if cuts occur."

## **About Community Oncology Alliance (COA)**

*COA is a non-profit organization dedicated solely to community oncology. COA was founded by community oncology to advocate for patients and providers in the community oncology setting, where 84 percent of Americans with cancer are treated. In only seven years of existence, COA has mobilized community oncology to become more politically active, and increased awareness on Capitol Hill about the community cancer care delivery system. Additionally, COA has brought together community oncology practices from across the country to share information in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the cancer care they provide to their patients.*