

Collaborative in an Era of Anything But...

By Tyler Wilson

A look at recent headlines from Washington could lead one to assume that anything involving health care is engulfed in a swirl of partisan deadlock and dysfunction. While that may be true with respect to legislative attempts to repeal and replace—or just repeal—the *Affordable Care Act*, a different story line has begun to emerge on Capitol Hill in a more targeted area of health care. Of course, I am referring to legislation relating to Medicare Part B and a proposed service payment for infusion drugs which would allow the most vulnerable of Medicare beneficiaries to receive infusion therapy at home.

The very day that Senator John McCain (R-AZ) delivered a watershed speech describing the Senate's deliberations as "more tribal... (than) at any time I can remember," the House of Representatives passed a bipartisan legislation critical to our industry and the elderly patients we serve.

NHIA's work to obtain a dedicated Medicare services payment for home infusion drugs stretches back a number of years. While the passage of the *21st Century Cures Act* included provisions for a Part B services payment to begin in 2021, we had to contend with a January 1, 2017, change in payment structure for Part B infusion drugs. The structure was significantly altered and went from an Average Wholesale Price (AWP) metric to an Average Sales Price (ASP) payment methodology.

The change in payment structure and the four-year gap between 2017 and 2021, left many providers struggling to meet the needs of Medicare's most fragile beneficiaries. Since passage of the *Cures Act*, NHIA has unrelentingly pushed for Congress to close the reimbursement gap and move up the implementation date for a services payment.

The home infusion community is making progress. On July 25, 2017, the House of Representatives passed the *Medicare Part B Improvement Act of 2017* (H.R. 3178) and on August 3, 2017, 18 senators helped introduce the *Medicare Home Infusion Therapy Access Act of 2017* (S. 1738).

While there remains much work to do to ensure Capitol Hill jointly approves a final bill, the path forward holds promise. We are grateful for the bipartisan groups in the House and Senate who have worked up to now to advance small, unglamorous changes to Medicare that will benefit beneficiaries for years to come. At the same time, months of forming alliances, hashing out of details, pooling resources, and navigating the legislative matrix on the Hill have led us to where we stand today. By working collaboratively, attaining legislation to address the Medicare Part B issue is closer to reality.

However, now, more than ever we need to continue to break through the stalemate on the Hill. And, we need your help to do that. Please continue to reach out to lawmakers on this issue. Write and call your Senators and urge them to cosponsor the *Medicare Home Infusion Therapy Access Act of 2017* (S. 1738). The path to future success does not emerge from isolated events, but from collaboration and ongoing engagement.



