



Physicians Caring for Texans

September 7, 2017

David D. Teuscher, MD
Regional Director, Regional VI
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
1301 Young St., Ste. 1124
Dallas, TX 75202

Re: 2017 Quality Payment Program Exemptions for Texas Physicians Affected by Hurricane Harvey

Dear Dr. Teuscher:

On behalf of the 50,000-plus physician and medical student members of the Texas Medical Association (TMA), we greatly appreciate the ongoing response by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to help Texas patients and physicians. As you know, physician practice management and clinical systems have been disrupted, damaged, or destroyed. Our physician members have immediate needs and issues, including access to care for patients, loss of practice infrastructure, and displaced practice staff.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency designated more than 30 counties as major disaster counties along or close to the Texas coastline. According to TMA estimates, approximately 20,000 physicians reside and practice in those affected areas. Due to the devastating impact Hurricane Harvey has had on our physician members, their patients, and their practices, we seek federal regulatory relief from data submission requirements and negative payment adjustments for noncompliance under the 2017 Quality Payment Program.

We believe the hardship due to the extreme and uncontrollable circumstances from this natural disaster will prevent many of our physician members from spending the time necessary to learn about program requirements. Many physicians will be challenged and no longer in a position to submit data successfully on quality measures and activities in 2017. Under the federal public health emergency declaration, TMA implores HHS and CMS to extend flexibilities to physician practices as it recently did for hospitals and facilities. Specifically, we ask that Secretary Thomas Price, MD exercise his waiver authority to grant affected physicians the option to be exempt from the 2017 Quality Payment Program.

TMA continues to assess the catastrophic loss to physician practices and stands ready to work with you to help our physician members throughout the Hurricane Harvey recovery period.

Sincerely,

Carlos J. Cardenas, MD
President