



*Independence Through
Enhancement of
Medicare and Medicaid*
COALITION

October 3, 2003

VIA MESSENGER AND FACSIMILE

Tom Scully
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
Room 314G Hubert Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

**Re: Request for Meeting Regarding CMS 10-Point Plan and OIG
Investigation to Combat Fraud and Abuse in the Power Wheelchair
Benefit Under Medicare**

Dear Mr. Scully:

This letter is submitted on behalf of a national, consumer-led coalition known as the "ITEM" Coalition, which is an acronym for Independence Through Enhancement of Medicare and Medicaid. The ITEM Coalition was formed in 2003, and its over 70 member organizations include a diverse set of disability organizations, aging organizations, other consumer groups, labor organizations, voluntary health associations, and non-profit provider associations. The ITEM Coalition's purpose is to raise awareness and build support for policies that will improve access to assistive devices, technologies and services for people of all ages with disabilities and chronic conditions.

The ITEM Coalition welcomes the federal government's 10 point-initiative to combat fraud and abuse in the purchase of power wheelchairs under Medicare's durable medical equipment benefit, as scarce resources are needed to promote beneficiary access to much needed rehabilitation equipment and assistive technologies. At the same time, we urge your caution in implementing the initiative to prevent unintended consequences and inappropriate denials of legitimate claims. We are concerned that well-meaning efforts to root out fraud and abuse may lead to coverage denials even in cases with ample documentation supporting the need for motorized devices.

Additionally, representatives of the ITEM Coalition request a meeting with you to discuss the involvement of beneficiaries and their advocates in promoting a better understanding of Medicare coverage criteria and appropriate access to needed

technologies. The need for the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to revise its coverage policies as part of the anti-fraud initiative presents an opportunity to revisit its current coverage policies in light of contemporary medical standards and social mores and to update them to prevent persons from being isolated in their homes.

Thank you for your initiative to reduce fraudulent claims under the Medicare power wheelchair benefit. We look forward to working closely with you to ensure that the final outcome results in more available funds for legitimate claims and improves access to rehabilitation equipment for beneficiaries. We will be in touch with your office soon to schedule a meeting. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 429-7694 or LeeP@pva.org on behalf of the ITEM Coalition Steering Committee members listed below if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,



Lee Page
Paralyzed Veterans of America
ITEM Coalition Steering Committee Member

Other Steering Committee Member Organizations

American Foundation for the Blind
Advancing Independence: Modernizing Medicare and Medicaid
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Health Task Force
Medicare Rights Center

Cc: Dara Corrigan, HHS Acting Principal Deputy Inspector General

Attachment: List of ITEM Coalition Members