

September 10, 2009

2365 Covington Rd.  
#425  
Akron, OH 44313

The Honorable Betty Sutton  
United States House of Representatives  
1721 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Sutton:

My name is Bill Giermann, and I live in Akron, OH. I am an 85 year-old prostate cancer survivor. My physician at Physicians Urology, Dr. Joseph Dankoff, recently informed me of a pending CMS physician payment rule that would have a serious impact on Physicians Urology's ability to continue providing critical cancer care like it provided me. According to my doctor, this rule would drastically cut the Medicare reimbursement rate for radiation therapy. As a result, many facilities like Physicians Urology would have to limit the services that they offer.

I was diagnosed with prostate cancer almost four years ago. After taking a routine physical, my physician informed me that my PSA levels were abnormally high and further tests concluded that I had cancer. Upon hearing this news, I was overcome with fear and uncertainty. From the very beginning, my physician recommended that I visit the Physicians Urology facility in Akron. I also received similar recommendations from friends and former colleagues.

Upon visiting Physicians Urology, I realized that this was the place best suited for me. First, the facility was easy to access because it was only four miles from my home. It was community based. Second, I was extremely pleased with the staff and technology at Physicians Urology. Because their practice focuses on prostate cancer and utilizes an integrated approach with regard to treating cancer, I had access to a practice with tremendous knowledge and state-of-the-art technology. I also had access to my original physician, Dr. Dankoff. I felt confident that they could address every concern that I had. I am happy to say that they surpassed my expectations in every way possible.

After undergoing 43 treatments of radiation therapy, my doctor informed me that my PSA levels had returned to normal and that the cancer had not spread to other areas of my body. I firmly believe that my treatment was successful because of the care I received at this facility.

Not only was every member of the staff professional, they were compassionate, caring, and friendly. They understood my fears and tried their best to alleviate my concerns. They made an extremely unpleasant experience pleasant. To this day, I am on a first name basis with several members of the staff and keep in touch with them. Every time they see me, they ask me how I feel and how my family is doing. In fact, Physicians Urology organizes a cookout once a year for patients and former patients. This is an important time for me because it allows me to see people I consider friends and to speak with other patients who are going through similar experiences I went through not to long ago.

As a former board member of St. Thomas Hospital of nearly 30 years and a former executive director of the American Cancer Society in Akron, I have a unique perspective on this issue. I have seen how hospitals can play a critical role in some settings and how other practices play a better role in different situations. In this case, I believe that community-based medical practices such as Physicians Urology provide better treatment than other comparable alternatives. This is evident by the fact that patients are happy and healthy and that their practice has consistently grown over the last few years.

Because they are a community-based medical practice with physicians of various backgrounds, I was able to access personalized, critical care in a less intimidating manner. I wasn't overwhelmed by the challenges I saw first hand in larger hospitals. When I was undergoing treatment, I was able to see the same doctor and staff at the same time every day. I was also able to choose which treatment made sense for me. I did not have the limited choices that are often present at other facilities.

I ask you to do all that you can to make sure that CMS does not finalize this problematic rule. CMS should understand how this will affect people like me if community-based practices have to limit care. Physicians Urology put me and my family at ease at a time of great uncertainty. Physicians and staff made me feel at home and at peace with my surroundings. If my cancer were to come back, I would want to know that I can receive the same successful treatment as I did before.

As my legislator, I ask that you ensure I have continued access to care, not limited choices.

Sincerely,

Bill Geirmann