

August 31, 2009

The Honorable Charles Schumer
United States Senate
313 Hart Senate Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

My name is Patrick Linehan, and I live in Amityville, NY. I am a 64 year-old prostate cancer survivor. My physician at Integrated Medical Professionals, PLLC recently informed me of a pending CMS physician payment rule that would have a serious impact on their ability to continue providing critical cancer care like it provided to me. According to my doctor, this rule would drastically cut the Medicare reimbursement rate for radiation therapy.

In February of this year, I completed 45 days of radiation treatment. After completing the treatment, my physician informed me that it had been successful and that the cancer had not spread. I was extremely happy upon hearing this news, and I am glad to say that I am able to continue living my life as I did before I was diagnosed. I am able to continue working as an independent, certified financial planner. I firmly believe that this treatment regimen was the single most important factor to my recovery and future well-being.

The staff at this facility was superb in every manner and the medical equipment was state-of-the art. I have to admit that after my fist five treatments, I wondered whether I would make it through the last forty. Undergoing cancer treatment places an extreme physical and emotional drain upon a person; however, through my experience at this facility, I found that there was nothing difficult about it except the tedium of every day's obligation. I found comfort in knowing that I had daily access to an extremely professional, knowledgeable, and compassionate staff. The staff that cared for me was also constant, I did not have to wonder, "Who will be taking care of me today?"

Not only did I find that my physicians were extremely compassionate, I found the entire staff, this included nurses, receptionists, appointment makers, and most of all technicians, were all caring, sympathetic, and considerate to the plight of all of their patients. Every one of them gives terrific succor. They make an often times undignified process palatable and helped me maintain a degree of comfort and peace-of mind. I appreciated their ability to attend to my concerns as well as their compassion, patience, and consideration. It was extremely beneficial to me knowing that I had access to this type of critical care only 15 minutes from my home. Also, the fact that the group operates multiple cancer centers that share information "real time" enabled me to have treatment at different facilities, depending on my schedule. Being able to continue my daily life despite undergoing cancer treatments really helped me through the process. I also formed close relationships with other patients that were undergoing treatment at the same time I was, and we all drew comfort and support for each other. This benefit from being treated in my community just would not have been possible at a large hospital setting.

As my voice in Congress and a leader on cancer issues, I hope that you will join other Members of Congress who are asking CMS to not restrict access to this type of care and treatment. If my cancer were to come back, I would want the ability to access the same facility that successfully treated me as before. I request that you contact CMS on my behalf and share my concerns. CMS should understand how this will affect people like me if community-based practices have to limit care they offer. As you are aware, those with cancer who have to endure this traumatic experience need the confidence that policy makers will protect treatment options of all Americans, especially Medicare beneficiaries.

As a cancer survivor and your constituent, I ask that you do all in your power to ensure that I can choose how and where my future care is delivered.

Sincerely,

Pat Linehan
New York