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AOTA URGES CMS TO STOP THERAPY CAP IMPLEMENTATION

(Washington, DC) — As limits to Medicare reimbursements for outpatient occupational therapy services go into effect, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) is urging the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to use administrative authority and continue paying for services beyond the arbitrary limit of \$1,740 per patient. Provisions to allow patients to exceed the therapy caps when it is medically necessary are contained in the budget-reconciliation bill that is still awaiting final passage in Congress.

“Medicare patients should not be victims in the Washington budget battle,” said AOTA President Dr. Carolyn Baum. “CMS should use its authority to enable patients to receive the services they need as we wait for the Congress to pass a federal budget.”

The tentative provisions in the budget reconciliation bill are limited to only one year. Further legislative action will be necessary to permanently fix how Medicare covers occupational therapy services. The occupational therapy cap was originally passed by Congress in 1997 but implementation has been delayed each year. At issue is the arbitrary nature of the Medicare reimbursement amount that has been set with little regard for the needs of patients. The AOTA supports the establishment of a Medicare reimbursement policy that is centered on patient need.

Two weeks ago, Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) wrote a letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt asking for an administrative moratorium on therapy cap implementation.

“We hope that Secretary Leavitt will listen not only to Senator Grassley, but to the thousands of patients who need these services,” Dr. Baum added. “We look forward to working with Congress in 2006 to set a realistic alternative that assures access to occupational therapy services.”

The American Occupational Therapy Association, established in 1917, represents nearly 40,000 members. AOTA is an active advocate for the profession, and for individuals who can benefit from occupational therapy services.