



**AMERICAN COLLEGE
OF RHEUMATOLOGY**
EDUCATION • TREATMENT • RESEARCH

Specialists in Arthritis Care & Research

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July 14, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Longworth House Office Building Room 1011
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader of the Senate
Hart Senate Office Building, Room 522
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Eric Cantor
Majority Leader of the House of Representatives
Cannon House Office Building, Room 303
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader of the Senate
Russell Senate Office Building, Room 317
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
Cannon House Office Building, Room 235
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner, Leader Reid, Leader Cantor, Leader McConnell, and Leader Pelosi:

The American College of Rheumatology urges you to oppose the \$3 billion in cuts to Medicare reimbursement for biologic drug therapies being discussed in the debt ceiling negotiations. Rheumatologists routinely use biologic drug therapies to treat the 1.3 million American suffering from rheumatoid arthritis and I strongly request Congress consider alternative options to ensure that our patients, as well as cancer patients, continue to have access to these necessary drugs.

Physicians already face reimbursement cuts across various areas of care. Reducing reimbursement for biologics will cause additional financial burdens to practicing physicians and will impact patient access to these essential drug therapies. Due to the formula created by the *Medicare Modernization Act of 2003* which includes prompt-pay discounts in the average sale price calculation, biologics are already reimbursed at artificially low rates under Medicare. There is currently bi-partisan support for legislation in both the House and Senate, introduced by Reps. Ed Whitfield and Gene Green (H.R 905), and Senators Debbie Stabenow and Pat Roberts (S. 733), that would remove the prompt-pay-discount between manufacturers and wholesalers in the reimbursement formula, ensuring the most equitable reimbursement for drug therapies.

The development of biologics for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis has provided RA patients with a renewed outlook on life. With early access and appropriate treatment, these drugs can prevent joint destruction and disability, avert expensive joint replacement surgery, and provide patients the opportunity to maintain daily functions, remain in the workforce and continue serving as tax-paying citizens. Any threat to their access to care would be devastating to their livelihoods.

The ACR recognizes that Congress shares similar goals to guarantee patients have access to high quality health care. To achieve this goal, Congress should not consider Medicare reimbursement cuts to biologics under Part B in debt ceiling negotiations.

If you have any questions, please contact the ACR's Government Affairs Director, Aiken Hackett, at (404) 633-3777 or ahackett@rheumatology.org for more information.

Sincerely,

David Borenstein, MD
President, American College of Rheumatology