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Medicare payments cut by 21%

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HARRISON COUNTY, MS (WLOX) - The President of the American Medical Association has a strong message for the U.S. Senate which failed to strike down a 21 percent Medicare physician payment formula.

"It's shocking that the Senate would abandon our most vulnerable patients, making them the collateral damage of their procedural games," Dr. James Rohack said.

A 21 percent cut in Medicare payments will leave more Medicare patients without access to care, according to the Mississippi State Medical Association's president, Dr. Randy Easterling.

"We've gotten an average increase of point seven percent over the past eight years and the price of our practice has gone up five to seven percent. If we get a 21 percent decrease, not only will we not be able to see new Medicare patients, but most physicians will have to turn down their current Medicare patients."

But Easterling said our nation's seniors won't be the only ones affected.

"Especially on the coast with the military population down there, TriCare would get the same cuts. And in Mississippi, Medicaid is paid a percentage of Medicare. So Medicaid would get cut."

Congressman Gene Taylor, who opposed the cuts, had this to say on his website regarding the situation:

"We are waiting for the Senate to act, and expect that eventually the Senate will figure out how to pass it. The delay in the Senate is mostly about whether this should be a stand-alone bill or should be attached to health care reform or economic stimulus or some other package."

According to the American Medical Association's website, one in four Medicare patients seeking a primary care physician is having trouble finding one.

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