

Impact of physician payments sunshine act discussed

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(HealthDay)—The Physician Payments Sunshine Act is causing concern for manufacturers and providers, as well as physicians, according to a health policy brief published online Oct. 2 in *Health Affairs*.

Elizabeth Richardson, from the Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform in Washington, D.C., discusses the implications of the Physician Payments Sunshine Act of the Affordable Care Act. The Act requires medical product manufacturers to disclose any payments or transfers of value made to physicians and teaching hospitals. The Act also requires certain manufacturers and group purchasing organizations (GPOs) to disclose physician ownership or investment interests.

Richardson notes that the reporting obligations began Aug. 1, 2013, with penalties imposed for failure to comply with the reporting requirements. Representatives of manufacturers and providers have raised concerns

about the reporting burden, as well as challenges associated with correcting inaccurate reports. The first year of reporting is estimated to cost \$269 million, with costs mainly accrued to manufacturers and GPOs. Providers have expressed concern about the process for disputing reported payments, and challenges surround its alignment with state laws. It is currently unclear how data will be used once published, and what impact they will have; physicians and manufacturer representatives have expressed concern over patient interpretation of the information.

"Even those who champion the program agree that simple disclosure is not sufficient to address financial conflicts of interest," Richardson writes. "More work is required to ensure that financial conflicts of interest are monitored and regulated appropriately."

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