



## ASK JOE

### How will the recent election affect current policy toward my practice?

The recent election has left us with a Republican controlled Congress working with a Republican President. As a businessman, my first reaction was positive and for many other business folks, remains such. Historically, the Republicans have been good for business and the economy. Tax reductions, corporate growth incentives and a general support of business stimulus programs have often been associated with the GOP.

Unfortunately, the Republicans don't typically view health care as a real business (except of course when it is convenient) and as a result, have aimed their budget guns our way. Since Medicare and Medicaid recipients are substantial consumers of this great Nation's health care services, many bureaucrats, especially in the GOP, view health care providers as part of the problem for a struggling, outdated system that is facing clinical, technical and financial hurdles never envisioned by its founders.

The government is seeking ways to control and reduce health care spending. This new Congress is in a position to move some legislation and policy forward that has been previously stymied because of partisan politics and strong opposing lobbies. This includes revisions to the average wholesale price (AWP) model for drugs, competitive bidding for Medicare Part B programs such as home medical equipment (HME) and infusion services, along with new formulas and allowables for inpatient and outpatient services. Demands for a prescription drug benefit for Medicare recipients has legislators looking for money harder than crusaders searched for the Holy Grail.

Although most health care experts doubt the affordability or viability of any meaningful Medicare prescription plan, beneficiaries are demanding it and the Medicare recipient vote is one of the strongest and loudest heard inside the beltway. Inevitably, there will be changes in reimbursement for chemotherapy agents and procedures. How these changes will impact our industry is yet to be seen. What we know for sure is that now is the time to act. Please get involved and voice your concerns locally and in Washington by writing letters to members of Congress, your State Representatives and Committee Chairman. Voicing your concerns to these decision makers will positively benefit your patients in the long run. In addition, explaining the rising costs of patient care to your practice will help maintain a standard of quality patient care for us all.

I want to assure you that the team at Oncology Associates is working hard with our members, pharmaceutical manufacturer partners and lobbyists to campaign against inappropriate changes in the payment systems that provide for and support quality outpatient cancer treatment. We will do our best to keep you informed of the issues and challenges facing providers.

Joseph Lewarski, OA's Chief Operating Officer and Co-founder, answers the frequently asked questions posed by OA's membership. Contact him with your questions at [jlewerski@rmed.com](mailto:jlewerski@rmed.com).

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## OA ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Oncology Associates (OA) is please to announce the following upcoming meetings:

### HEAD NURSE/PRACTICE MANAGER BI-ANNUAL MEETING: March, 2003, Las Vegas, NV

This meeting will provide a comfortable forum for Head Nurses and Practice Managers to discuss current issues in Oncology practice and will feature round table discussions, focus groups and notable speakers. Please call OA at **888-732-7352** if you are interested in attending. Additional information coming soon...

### ONS: May 1-3, 2003, Denver, CO

OA will be present at the Oncology Nurse Society 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress.

### ASCO: May 31-June 3, 2003, Chicago, IL

OA will be attending the American Society of Clinical Oncology Annual Meeting. Please visit us at **booth number 1782**.

### ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING: August, 2003 (location to be announced)

Please join us for our annual members meeting in August where members will have the opportunity to network with other OA members, participate in focus groups and discussions, and gain valuable information from notable speakers. Please call OA at **888-732-7352** if you are interested in attending. Additional information coming soon...

**REGIONAL NETWORKING DINNERS:** OA is in the process of planning several regional dinner meetings with the goal of providing networking and educational opportunities for members in the same geographic location. More information about regional networking dinners in your area is coming soon...

**WE'RE MOVING!** As our operations continue to grow, we have found the need for more office space. The OA offices are moving in December. Our new contact information is as follows: **Oncology Associates; 34675 Vokes Drive, Suite 105; Eastlake, OH 44095; Phone: 888-732-7352; Fax: 440-942-7970.**

**ONCOLOGY ASSOCIATES**  
Physician Network Services

34675 Vokes Drive, Suite 105  
Eastlake, OH 44095