

## Dear Colleague Letter Being Circulated on Capitol Hill in House of Representatives on Avastin Issue (CMS Reimbursement)

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Dear Colleague,

We want to draw your attention to an article in the New York Times that discusses a recent Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) decision to change the reimbursement code for physicians who prescribe small doses of Avastin.

([http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/02/business/02avastin.html?\\_r=1&emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/02/business/02avastin.html?_r=1&emc=eta1) )

Avastin is used by ophthalmologists to treat wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD), a debilitating and potentially blinding condition that affects over 1.75 million Americans. This change will significantly raise the cost of treatment of AMD for patients as well as the Medicare program. The cost to physicians of acquiring Avastin under the new code will be three to four times the new reimbursement rate. As a result, ophthalmologists will be forced to treat AMD with the much more costly alternative, Lucentis. Lucentis, which is approved and ophthalmologists can be fully reimbursed for by Medicare, costs \$2,000 per injection, more than 40 times the cost of Avastin. This is even more shocking when you consider that patient's can expect their copayments to increase by 4000 percent.

For those living on a fixed income and a Medicare program that is already short on funds, this change could be devastating. We urge you to join us in sending the below letter to Acting CMS Administrator Charlene Frizzera so we can prevent our constituents and Medicare from being adversely affected by this change in code.

To sign on to the letter or for more information, please contact Justin Grabelle at [Justin.grabelle@mail.house.gov](mailto:Justin.grabelle@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

Ginny Brown-Waite, Member of Congress

Richard Neal, Member of Congress