

Emergency Department Physicians Ask Congress To Pass Legislation That Would Address Cost of Treating Uninsured, ED Overcrowding, Lack of On-Call Specialists

From the **Kaisernetwork.org Daily Report**

Reps. Bart Gordon (D-Tenn.) and Pete Sessions (R-Texas) on Wednesday reintroduced a bill that would increase by 10% Medicare reimbursements to physicians who provide care in EDs or post-stabilization care related to emergency medical conditions in other areas of hospitals, CQ HealthBeat reports. In addition, the legislation, which the lawmakers first sponsored in the 109th Congress, would establish a commission to examine issues such as ED overcrowding, the availability of on-call specialists and medical liability issues that affect delivery of emergency care. The lawmakers said that a reallocation of current health care spending could help cover the cost of the legislation, which the Congressional Budget Office to date has not scored. Sessions said, "We have more than enough money. It is a question of priorities." According to ED physicians who support the bill, increased Medicare reimbursements are needed to help offset the cost of uninsured patients who often seek care in EDs. ED physicians on average have \$140,000 in uncompensated care annually, compared with \$12,000 on average for all physicians, according to Robert Solomon, a board member of the American College of Emergency Physicians. In addition, the need to prepare for potential terrorist attacks, flu pandemics or other emergencies places additional pressure on EDs, ACEP President Brian Keaton said (Carey, CQ HealthBeat, 2/7).

kaisernetwork.org -- a free service of the Kaiser Family Foundation -- provides in-depth coverage of health policy news, debates and discussions to policymakers, the media and general public.