

# Medicare and You

## Reform Could Speed Access To Lifesaving Technology

(NAPSA)—Here's the good news: Medical breakthroughs offer hope every day to millions of people suffering from some of the most deadly and debilitating diseases, such as heart failure and many forms of cancer. Recent studies have shown that due in part to advances in medical technology, there were 2.4 million fewer disabled seniors in 2000 than projected 20 years ago, saving Medicare \$20 billion in nursing home costs alone.

The bad news is that bureaucratic delays at Medicare deny seniors access to many lifesaving medical tests and treatments.

"The lengthy process for coverage decisions on new medical technologies puts lives and quality-of-life at risk for millions of vulnerable seniors," said Pamela G. Bailey, president of AdvaMed, the Advanced Medical Technology Association, representing leading medical technology innovators. "As a result, seniors who depend on Medicare can become second-class citizens when it comes to the best available treatment."

Delays and inadequate reimbursement affect the use of life-sustaining heart devices, such as implantable cardiac defibrillators and left ventricular assist devices to increase blood flow to the heart. Other affected technologies include: carotid stents that open carotid arteries to prevent strokes, special coils that prevent brain aneurysms from bursting, and positron emission tomography (PET) scans that can detect cancer in early stages.

"The impact on patients is disturbing," said Ken Stein, M.D., cardiologist at Weill Cornell Medical Center. "It's not easy to tell a patient that Medicare doesn't cover a certain technology or test,



**Advances in medical technology mean shorter hospital stays, faster recovery times, less disability, more outpatient care and earlier detection of disease.**

especially when the care is available to patients with private health insurance."

"Significant barriers stand in the way of Medicare patients and their physicians accessing new lifesaving and life-improving medical tests and treatments," said Bailey. "It is imperative that we eliminate these obstacles and provide these patients with the high-quality health care they deserve."

Fortunately for Medicare patients, help is on the way. Leaders in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate recently passed the most substantial overhaul of the Medicare program in its 38-year history. This important legislation will eliminate these long bureaucratic delays, ensuring the 40 million elderly and disabled Americans who rely on Medicare have access to quality, affordable health care.

To learn more, please visit [www.AdvaMed.org](http://www.AdvaMed.org).