

Lymphoma Foundation of America

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The Honorable Herb B. Kuhn
Acting Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Re: CMS-1392-P -- Proposed reimbursement rates for
Radioimmunotherapy: Bexxar (1I31 tositumomab) and Zevalin (Y90
ibrutumomab)

Dear Administrator Kuhn:

We are responding to the recent notice in the Federal Register concerning the proposed cuts for radioimmunotherapy in the treatment of lymphoma.

Lymphoma Foundation of America is the oldest lymphoma foundation in the United States. We are a national, nonprofit charity that provides patient support services, nurse-counseling, referrals, and educational programs. We also fund research and support the work of cancer epidemiologists at major universities and cancer centers.

We wish to take this opportunity to voice our opposition to proposed cuts in Medicare funding for radioimmunotherapy agents Bexxar and Zevalin.

Radioimmunotherapy is an effective, lifesaving treatment for lymphoma. It is our direct experience that many people with lymphoma who do not respond well to first-line therapies, have survived and recovered because of the availability of Bexxar and Zevalin.

In our opinion, it is bad public policy to curtail the use of life-saving therapies when there is no clearly superior alternative treatment available for cancer patients. Medicare's proposed reduction in funding will effectively make Bexxar and Zevalin unavailable to individuals who, because of their life-threatening illness, stand to benefit the most from these drugs.

Medicare's lack of adequate reimbursement levels for Bexxar and Zevalin may also, over time, result in their disappearance from the list of currently available, effective treatments for lymphoma. Terminating a proven life-saving therapy in this fashion will likely have chilling effects on efforts by the cancer research community to develop new and novel therapies.



Mr. Kuhn, Medicare officials need to look beyond statistics. We need to see real people, their families, their spouses and children, who are given a second chance at life because of Bexxar and Zevalin. What does it mean to three teenage boys to have their mom overcome a death sentence, and recover from non-Hodgkins lymphoma because of Bexxar? Perhaps you'd like to meet this family. They live in Maryland, not far from Baltimore.

It is our belief that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services should continue to follow fiscally-responsible policies that keep the "health" in health care policy.

We respectfully request that you maintain the reimbursement level for Bexxar and Zevalin at their current rates. To do otherwise, is to cause great suffering and grief among patients, and frustration for their doctors, who desperately need access to these life-saving drugs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Zetlin". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

Peter Zetlin
Vice President