



For Immediate Release

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Cogent Healthcare's COO Rusty Holman Participates in Senate Roundtable

CMS and healthcare organizations convene discuss reimbursement and value-based purchasing program

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. – Rusty Holman, M.D, chief operating officer of Nashville-based Cogent Healthcare and president of the Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM), was asked to participate in a roundtable discussion that took place last Thursday by **Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus** (D-Mont.) and **Ranking Member Chuck Grassley** (R-Iowa). The roundtable convened to examine value-based purchasing of hospital care in Medicare which seeks to financially reward hospitals for providing high-quality care or for making improvements in quality.

The roundtable included representatives from 22 health care organizations, only two of which were physician organizations – Society of Hospital Medicine and American College of Surgeons.

"I am privileged to have been invited to this landmark event in healthcare policy development and was encouraged by the level of consensus in the vision to move towards incentives for quality," said Holman. "Reforms that align payments with the quality – instead of volume – of services provided are urgently needed."

Representatives from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) presented an overview of the Agency's November 2007 report to Congress outlining the Agency's plan to implement a Medicare hospital value-based purchasing program. The roundtable involved a discussion of key issues concerning quality measures, performance standards, incentives and implementation of the CMS plan. Participants presented their views on both the positive and negative aspects of the plan, and how it could be improved.

While an official transcript will be available within the week, some highlights included:

- Consensus that a system involving incentives, for both improvement in quality measures as well as the absolute performance of those measures, should be phased in over time;
- Interest for CMS to eventually move to outcome measures (e.g., mortality rates) instead of simply measures of structure (e.g., nurse-to-patient ratios) or process (e.g., rates of influenza vaccination); and
- Belief that better, well-supported processes (including necessary investments in IT) will be essential to show that reported measures are reliable and accurate.

Holman added, "As hospitalists – physicians whose professional focus is on the care of the hospitalized patient – we are in a unique position to lead and implement quality improvement efforts in hospitals across the country. I look forward to a payment system that better supports hospitals, physicians and nurses working together towards higher quality care and a better care experience for patients."

For a complete listing of roundtable members, statements from roundtable participants and Senators Baucus and Grassley, and the actual webcast, please visit:

<http://www.senate.gov/~finance/sitepages/VBProundtable030408.htm>.

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About Cogent Healthcare

With more than 400 employees and hospitalist programs in 16 states, Cogent Healthcare partners with hospitals to create and manage comprehensive hospitalist programs. Its focus is to relentlessly improve the care and efficiency of hospitalized patients by reducing variations in care, establishing best practices, identifying and removing barriers to efficient care and measuring outcomes. To this end, the company provides a system of care to its hospital partners that supports hospitalists in the delivery of inpatient care and includes structure, a coordinated care team, data driven processes, rigorous ongoing training and experienced leadership. Cogent physicians continue to lead the profession by setting best practices for hospital medicine and providing a national mentoring program. For more information about Cogent Healthcare, visit www.cogenthealthcare.com.

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