



Surgeons Speak Out to Stop Payment Cuts

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### Dr. John Calhoon: Surgeons Are “Unnecessarily Penalized” under New CMS Rule

John Calhoon, MD, FACS, STS is a cardiothoracic surgeon at the University of Texas Health Center at San Antonio. In the *San Antonio Express-News*, he explained why Congress needs to prevent the upcoming Medicare payment cuts or else America’s most vulnerable patients will lose access to high quality and timely surgical care. Dr. Calhoon has been on the frontlines since the beginning of the pandemic and continues to fight COVID-19 as San Antonio and cities across Texas experience a surge in cases. Calhoon wrote, “Health care workers will continue to provide care and support to those who need it. In turn, they must not be unnecessarily penalized.” Read more from Dr. Calhoon in the *San Antonio Express-News*.

## Take Action: Tell Congress to Stop the Cuts

The new Medicare Physician Fee Schedule proposed rule to be released soon by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for calendar year 2021 ignores both patients and the surgeons who care for them. The rule builds on the cuts CMS imposed last year that are set to take effect in January and will see surgeons’ Medicare payments cut - up to nearly 8 percent for some surgeons. These cuts have posed a problem to our patients ever since CMS finalized the proposal in November 2019. Even before COVID-19, they presented a difficult future to surgical patients, but if they go into effect while the country continues to confront the virus, Americans will pay an even greater cost. We urge you to make your voice heard by heading to the platform on the Surgical Care Coalition website to write to your representatives about the dangerous consequences this rule will have on America’s surgeons, hospitals, and most importantly, patients.

### Dr. Ara Feinstein: “We Need Congress To Protect Us”

Ara Feinstein, MD, MPH, FACS argues in the *Arizona Republic* this week that another pause in elective procedures could devastate an already struggling health care system, as will the impending Medicare payment cuts as recovery seems further away. Dr. Feinstein is a trauma surgeon and physician executive at Banner Health in Phoenix, Arizona, where COVID-19 cases have dramatically increased in recent weeks. Feinstein explains, “we will continue to rise to the challenge of this unprecedented moment, and we will fulfill our oath and our obligation to heal. In turn, we need Congress to protect us.” Read more from Dr. Feinstein on [azcentral.com](https://www.azcentral.com).

# New Data Shows Impact of COVID-19 on Physician Practices

Recent research from NDP Analytics found COVID-19 is having a devastating impact on physician practices. Private physician practices have lost an estimated \$104-\$158 billion through June due to COVID-19. As the virus surges around the country, debates on another pause in elective procedures poses a potential threat to the relative financial stability health care providers have managed to secure in the past several weeks. Combined with patient fear of contracting COVID-19 at hospitals and health care centers, the health care industry is fighting an uphill battle to economic recovery. Read the full report [here](#).

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