



## Why LUGPA Advocacy Matters Outline

LUGPA's mission is to ensure the independent practice of urology while showcasing outstanding quality and value to patients, vendors, payors, legislators, and regulatory agencies. We prioritize preserving the autonomy of urologists, allowing them to provide individualized care to patients based on their expertise. Simultaneously, we strive to demonstrate the highest standards of quality and value through evidence-based practices, patient satisfaction, and effective communication with stakeholders.

### Advocating for Improved Patient Choice and Access to Care

#### 1. Price Transparency

Price transparency allows patients to assess and choose which healthcare services they receive based on cost and quality. When this data is available, patients can see how independent practices provide higher quality and more affordable care than hospitals. Not only does it benefit patients, but price transparency also helps to level the playing field between hospital monopolies and our independent practices. This, in turn, fosters a competitive healthcare market and a path toward value-based care for all.

#### [LUGPA Healthcare Price Transparency Update](#)

#### [Enhancing Healthcare Price Transparency and Cost Reduction](#)

#### 2. Drug Pricing and Access

The cost of prescription drugs, especially in urology, significantly impacts patients and independent urologists. Initiatives like transparent drug pricing and increased access to affordable medications can help relieve the financial burden on patients and support sustainable healthcare practices. High drug prices limit access to necessary treatments, affecting patients and independent urologists. This can lead to compromised treatment plans and delayed interventions, negatively impacting patient health. Simplifying insurance coverage and authorization processes can also free up valuable time and resources for urologists to focus on patient care. Ensuring affordable and accessible medications is crucial for the well-being of both patients and independent urologists.

#### [LUGPA Calls for Drug Pricing Reforms to Protect Patient Access to Care](#)

#### [Prescription Drug Distribution and Drug Costs](#)

### Promoting a Strong Doctor-Patient Relationship

#### 1. Prior Authorization Requirements

Prior authorization is the process by which healthcare providers must obtain approval from insurance companies before certain treatments or procedures can be performed. Cumbersome and time-consuming prior authorization requirements can create administrative burdens, leading to delays in patient care and increased administrative costs.

## [LUGPA Policy Update: Prior Authorization](#)

### 2. Step Therapy

Step therapy regulations present significant challenges and interference for independent urologists. These rules often force patients to try less expensive medications before accessing potentially more effective treatments prescribed by the urologist. While cost control may be the goal, it hinders personalized care tailored to each patient's needs. Delayed access to necessary medications can lead to prolonged suffering and complications. These regulations may compromise clinical judgment, and the administrative burden of navigating them consumes valuable time and resources. Flexibility in treatment decisions and streamlined processes are essential for urologists to provide optimal patient care.

## [LUGPA Step Therapy Update](#)

### **Maximizing Flexibility and Autonomy for Independent Urologists**

#### 1. In-Office Dispensing

The issue of patient compliance with prescribed medications is crucial for independent urologists as it directly impacts the effectiveness of care. A significant percentage of prescriptions go unfilled, leading to non-compliance and increased long-term healthcare costs. To address this, integrating pharmaceutical dispensing into physician practices can improve patient access, care coordination, and compliance monitoring. In-office dispensing has demonstrated equivalency to pharmacy dispensing and offers advantages such as immediate medication adjustments and direct interaction with physicians. However, CMS's recent FAQ on in-office ancillary services poses challenges and limitations on access to life-saving medical treatments. LUGPA advocates for the retraction of this FAQ and supports the current In-Office Ancillary Services Exception to protect access to integrated urology care and ensure patients receive the best medical care with the best outcomes close to home.

## [LUGPA In-Office Dispensing Policy Brief](#)

#### 2. Telemedicine and Virtual Care

Telehealth services played a crucial role in maintaining healthcare access during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regulatory changes allowed for rapid telehealth expansion and improved patient access. However, some beneficial changes, like telehealth payment parity and cross-state licensing, have been allowed to expire post-pandemic. LUGPA supports bipartisan legislation to make these expansions permanent, as they are essential for independent urologists in their day-to-day practice. The continued coverage and reimbursement flexibility of telehealth services enable urologists to provide high-quality care tailored to each patient's needs without geographic restrictions. Payment parity ensures financial stability for providers and expanded telehealth coverage improves access to care, particularly in rural areas.

## [Telehealth Post-Pandemic, LUGPA Update](#)

## Promoting Efficient Healthcare Delivery

### 1. MACRA Reform

Reforming the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) is crucial for the program's long-term viability. MACRA's flawed pay-for-performance programs pit providers against each other and fail to drive physicians toward value-based care. This disconnect between the current Medicare physician payment policy and the expenses incurred by independent practices leaves urologists struggling financially, leading to burnout and early retirement and the physician shortage. As a specialty group greatly affected by these issues, LUGPA emphasizes protecting physicians by providing stable payment updates that reflect economic realities and healthcare practice costs. [LUGPA submitted comments to Congress on how to improve MACRA and Physician Payment Reform](#), recommending the development of physician-focused payment models, the repeal of the ineffective MIPS program, meaningful payment rewards for high-performing practices, and ensuring site neutrality payments to maintain patient access and control healthcare costs.

#### [Monitor Regulatory Implementation of MACRA](#)

### 2. Medicare Fee Schedules

Medicare fee schedules play a crucial role in determining the reimbursement rates for medical services provided to Medicare beneficiaries. These fee schedules are important for independent urologists as they directly impact their financial viability and ability to provide quality care. Adequate reimbursement rates are essential to cover the cost of services, maintain necessary equipment, and attract skilled urologists to underserved areas. However, in recent years, Medicare fee schedules have faced challenges, with potential reductions that could severely affect independent urologists' practices.

LUGPA advocates preserving fair and sustainable Medicare fee schedules and appropriate payment rates. LUGPA engages in ongoing dialogue with policymakers and government agencies to highlight the vital role of independent urologists in delivering high-quality care to Medicare beneficiaries. Through their advocacy efforts, LUGPA seeks to ensure that Medicare fee schedules adequately reflect the value and complexity of urologic services, safeguarding the financial stability of independent urologists and promoting access to exceptional care for patients. By addressing these issues, LUGPA aims to create a more favorable reimbursement environment supporting the continued success and growth of independent urology practices.

#### [Medicare Fee Schedules](#)

#### [Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Calculator Tool](#)

#### [New Resources on 2024 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Changes](#)

### 3. Value-Based Care (VBC)

LUGPA supports regulatory and legislative efforts to lower healthcare costs and improve patient access to care, focusing on bringing payment reform to Medicare. Medicare's traditional fee-for-service reimbursement model has been a significant cost driver, leading to inefficiencies and overutilization of services. To address this, Medicare has been transitioning towards value-based care, which ties payments to specific quality measures demonstrating efficiency and effectiveness. Value-based care aims to provide better care, improve population health management, and reduce healthcare costs.

This transition is critical for independent urologists as it directly impacts their financial stability and ability to provide specialized care. LUGPA actively supports the development of specialty-focused value-based care models and has advocated for alternative payment models to be evaluated for their effectiveness. They have also recommended various reforms to Congress to promote the adoption of value-based care and ensure fair reimbursement for independent providers. By advocating for these changes, LUGPA seeks to create a more sustainable, patient-centered healthcare system for independent urologists and their patients.

[LUGPA Policy Brief: Value-Based Care Models](#)

[Promoting Payment Parity and Competition in Urology Care](#)

#### **Ensuring Healthy Competition**

One of LUGPA's primary goals is to ensure that independent urologists work on a fair and level playing field and are not hindered by obstructive rules and regulations that favor other providers. Fair and competitive reimbursement rates for urological services support independent practices by leveling the playing field with larger healthcare entities. It is equally important for independent urologists to ensure that reimbursement rates do not favor certain sites of care. Site neutrality can promote healthy competition and protect the interests of LUGPA's independent urology practices.

Restricting non-compete agreements supports healthy competition by allowing physicians to choose where they practice freely. This enhances innovation and nimbleness within the urology field, as it encourages independent urologists to explore new practice models and adapt to evolving patient needs.

#### 1. Healthcare Mergers and Acquisitions

As hospital merger and acquisition activity continue to increase rapidly, patients face a decline in care quality and increases in care costs. Since independent physicians are at the center of delivering high-quality patient care, when practices and hospitals consolidate, hospitals have an unfair advantage in the healthcare market. This equips hospitals with the ability to set high prices for care. This costly care is tied to low-quality care and poor patient outcomes. Competition in the healthcare landscape is integral to the existence and success of independent practices and, thus, the delivery of value-based care for patients.

[LUGPA Policy Brief: Hospital Consolidation, Mergers, and Acquisitions](#)

## 2. Site-neutral Physician Reimbursement

Site-neutral physician payments are paramount to independent urologists in their day-to-day practice. These payments ensure that physicians are compensated fairly and equitably for the services they provide, regardless of the setting in which they are delivered. By eliminating the disparities in reimbursement between hospital-based and freestanding clinics, site-neutral payments level the playing field for independent urologists. This allows them to focus on delivering high-quality patient care without financial constraints or incentives tied to the location of their practice. It empowers independent urologists to make clinical decisions based solely on patient needs, fostering a patient-centered approach and preserving the integrity of the physician-patient relationship. Ultimately, site-neutral physician payments promote a more sustainable and equitable healthcare system for independent urologists and their patients.

### [LUGPA Policy Update: Site-Neutral Payment Reform](#)

## 3. Non-Competes in the Healthcare Marketplace

Independent urologists greatly benefit from the ability to utilize non-compete clauses in their day-to-day practice. These clauses provide them with a crucial measure of protection by preventing departing physicians from establishing competing practices in close proximity. By ensuring a fair and competitive environment, non-compete clauses allow independent urologists to maintain a stable patient base and preserve the integrity of their practice. They also foster an atmosphere of collaboration among urologists, enabling the sharing of expertise and resources for the benefit of patients. Ultimately, non-compete clauses empower independent urologists to safeguard their hard-earned reputation, sustain their practice's growth, and continue delivering quality care to their community.

### [LUGPA Opposes the Proposed Federal Trade Commission \(FTC\) Rules that Would Restrict Non-competes in the Healthcare Marketplace](#)

## **Promoting Diagnostic Advancements, Innovative and Nimble**

### 1. Molecular Urine Testing

Molecular urine testing represents an innovative diagnostic advancement that can aid in detecting and monitoring prostate cancer. Supporting access to and reimbursement for such tests aligns with LUGPA's mission to demonstrate value and offer cutting-edge diagnostic options to urology patients. Advancements in genetic testing for prostate cancer patients provide personalized and targeted treatment options. Advocating for access to these tests helps urologists demonstrate their commitment to delivering high-quality, individualized care while staying at the forefront of medical advancements.

### [PCR and NAAT Testing Medicare Update](#)

## 2. Diagnostic Genetic Testing for Prostate Cancer Patients

The non-coverage of diagnostic genetic testing for prostate cancer patients poses a significant challenge to independent urologists and patients in their day-to-day practice. Genetic testing plays a crucial role in identifying inherited gene mutations and guiding treatment decisions for prostate cancer. Independent urologists rely on these tests to provide personalized and targeted care to their patients, helping to determine the most appropriate treatment options and improving overall outcomes. However, the lack of insurance coverage for diagnostic genetic testing creates financial barriers for both urologists and patients. Independent urologists may face limited access to these essential tests, hindering their ability to provide optimal care. Additionally, patients may experience financial burdens, making it difficult to afford necessary genetic testing and potentially impeding their access to the most effective treatment options. The non-coverage of diagnostic genetic testing not only hampers the ability of independent urologists to deliver high-quality care but also limits patients' access to personalized treatment plans tailored to their genetic profiles. [READ MORE](#)