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Annual Meeting:  
March 14-17, 2008  
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Publications:  
*American Journal of  
Geriatric Psychiatry* and  
*Geriatric Psychiatry News*

April 13, 2007

The Honorable Fortney "Pete" Stark  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry (AAGP), I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continuous leadership in eliminating discriminatory insurance coverage for those older Americans who suffer from mental disorders.

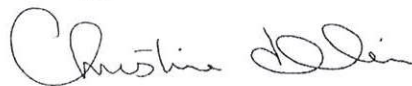
AAGP strongly supports H.R. 1663, the "Medicare Mental Health Modernization Act of 2007," which you introduced on March 23.

Medicare coverage of mental health services is fragmented and subject to arbitrary and discriminatory limitations. For example, although coinsurance for most services covered by Medicare is 20 percent, current law requires a 50 percent co-payment for mental health services furnished by psychiatrists and other health care professionals who specialize in the treatment of mental illness. In addition, current law places an arbitrary 190-day lifetime cap on inpatient services in psychiatric hospitals. These limits, which date back to the inception of the Medicare program in 1965, are based on the outmoded assumption that all mental illness is chronic and requires unlimited therapeutic services. Advances in treatment have made this assumption highly inaccurate. Your bill would establish parity between mental health benefits and other medical benefits under the Medicare program. It would also help to increase access to effective and appropriate mental health treatment by providing Medicare coverage for community-based services such as psychiatric rehabilitation and substance abuse treatment centers.

Your legislation stands to dramatically improve the lives of Medicare beneficiaries by providing them with the access to mental health care that they deserve.

AAGP commends you for our ongoing dedication to ensuring that all Americans have adequate access to effective mental health treatments, and we look forward to working with you to achieve the enactment of the "Medicare Mental Health Modernization Act of 2007."

Sincerely,



Christine M. deVries  
CEO and Executive Vice President