



Academy of Physicians
in Wound Healing

2806 Reynolda Road, Suite 194, Winston-Salem, NC 27106
336-923-5604 • info@apwh.org • apwh.org

May 31, 2016

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
Chairman
Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
412 Russel Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
412 Russel Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Isakson and Ranking Member Blumenthal

The Academy of Physicians in Healing (APWH) is the only physician specific membership organization in wound healing. As such, it represents allopathic and podiatric physicians which provides the APWH with a “balanced” point of view in addressing bill S. 2175, Department of Veterans Affairs Provider Equity Act and in particular a letter that was drafted by the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) dated February 23, 2016.

Bill S. 2175 primarily addresses an inconsistency in compensation between podiatric physicians and their allopathic/osteopathic colleagues. The AAOS February 23 letter directed to both of you indicates a total misunderstanding of the bill and therefore misrepresents the intent of the bill. The AAOS correspondence implies that S. 21 75 addresses issues dealing with scope of practice which is not correct.

Indeed the “Congress.Gov” web site states the following:

[“S.2175 - Department of Veterans Affairs Provider Equity Act114th Congress \(2015-2016\)](#)

[There is one summary for S.2175. Bill summaries are authored by CRS.](#)

Shown Here: Introduced in Senate (10/08/2015) Department of Veterans Affairs Provider Equity Act

[This bill includes podiatrists within the Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\) definition of physician, and increases their pay grade to match other VA physician compensation.”](#)

The treatment of non-healing wounds involves a large number of patients for Veterans Association Medical Centers across the country. This area of medicine is relevant to both “wounded warrior” and the numerous patients suffering with the sequela of diabetes, arterial and venous disease – which lead to *limb loss, increased cost of care, and poor quality of life.*

Podiatric physicians are an integral important aspect of the physician team addressing these patients. Their expertise and total understanding of lower limb orthopedic, vascular, and other medical aspects has been demonstrated repeatedly to be uncompromised. Indeed without their services other providers could be placed in a position that could require medical staff to provide services for which they were not as well trained as a podiatric physician surgeon.

Podiatric physician are *uniquely qualified to provide both surgical and non-surgical approaches to lower limb problems*. This is in sharp contrast to the training of other specialties, such as internal medicine or orthopedic surgery which may impart either a medical or surgical bias for managing the associated problems.

The discrepancy between allopathic compensation and that of the podiatrist is without merit and needs to be corrected. Failure to do so would ultimately result in podiatric specialists not seeking Veterans Association employment to meet the demand required today. It is an “unfair” policy not consistent with current level of training or current state of practice and will jeopardize the health care of the veterans served.

The APWH is appreciative of the AAOS and the concerns it expresses to represent its membership. However in this situation the draft a letter of February 23 is misleading.

In summary the proposed compensation system is outdated. It does not reflect the advances in podiatric science, the intensity of training, and the contributions to cost-effective care stemming from both surgical and nonsurgical strategies. The proposed policy will place the patients of the Veterans Association at risk by providing a disincentive for podiatrists to not seek participation in this very important aspect of our healthcare delivery system at a time when many are calling for a closer review of specialist access. Our veterans deserve the very best medical care available. The Veterans Association seeks the very best qualified to provide care for their patients. An equal compensation system for podiatric and allopathic physicians will ensure access to all specialties providing care for limb threatening lower extremity problems.

Should you or others of the committee have any further questions feel free to contact the APWH. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important issue.



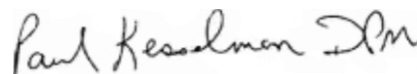
Robert Bartlett MD, CPE, FAPWHc
Chair, APWH Legislative Committee



Steven Kravitz, DPM, FAPWHc,
Executive Director, APWH



Paul Glat, MD, FAPWH
President, APWH Advisory Board



Paul Kesselman, DPM, FAPWH
Co-Chair, APWH Legislative Committee