

Ensure Change Healthcare Provides Financial Support for Physicians

In March, ACP wrote a [letter](#) to HHS highlighting the significant financial strain this cyberattack has imposed on physicians who rely on Change Healthcare's claims and billing systems, the largest in the U.S. health care system. Unfortunately, physicians, especially those in smaller practices that serve rural and underserved communities, have continued to have cashflow issues that severely threaten patient access to care and practice viability. In May, ACP wrote another [letter](#) to HHS expressing continued concerns and urging the need for additional action to support physicians and protect patient access to care. ACP also [wrote](#) to the National Governors Association, calling for state-based actions and coordination with federal agencies.

UnitedHealth and Change Healthcare have not done enough to support and resource physicians over the past two months. Instead, many physicians have been without the necessary capital to provide care since the cyberattack, and most practices are unaware of the steps that HHS and others have taken to establish workarounds. A [recent survey](#) from the American Medical Association found that in the aftermath of this cyberattack, 55 percent of practices have had to use personal funds to cover expenses, and about one-quarter of practices have received financial assistance from UnitedHealth.

The College is therefore strongly urging the Finance Committee and HHS to take further action to work wit

Allow Paper Claims and Extended Grace Period in Aftermath of Attack

We also recommend that HHS take steps to allow and encourage paper claims for an extended grace period following the complete restoration of Change Healthcare's systems. Currently, practices are backlogged on administrative tasks and claims submissions and are also facing the choice of reconnecting to the Change Healthcare systems or choosing a new clearinghouse. There is a learning curve for physicians when adopting these new clearinghouses, and physicians should not be forced to choose between providing care and completing administrative tasks disrupted by this incident. Allowing paper claim submission during this transition period and for months after would allow physicians to place their primary

Improve the Security of the Health Care Infrastructure

As HHS continues to work with physician partners, Change Healthcare, and UnitedHealth to address these issues, ACP strongly encourages special attention to be paid to the ongoing and rising cybersecurity and privacy risks within the health care infrastructure. We encourage the Finance Committee to consider legislation to ensure that HHS and federal agencies responsible for protecting and securing health data must guarantee that these delays, barriers, and breaches are not repeated in future cyberattacks. These gaps must be addressed in future rulemaking, and appropriate penalties must be assessed due to any adverse findings via investigation.

Conclusion

We thank the Senate Finance Committee for holding this hearing and their ongoing efforts to hold Change Healthcare and UnitedHealth accountable for their actions in the aftermath of this attack. The College will continue to give feedback to the Finance Committee and HHS and inform our members' perspectives during this challenging time. We ask that you keep us posted on your ongoing investigation and any new information that may be helpful to our physicians. Please do not hesitate to contact Brian Buckley, our Senior Associate for Legislative Affairs at bbuckley@acponline.org if you have any questions regarding this statement.