



American Academy of
Hospice and Palliative Medicine

November 10, 2009

To the Editor of the *Wall Street Journal*:

“What the Pelosi Health-Care Bill Really Says” (Nov. 8, 2009) presented a misrepresentation of what is in the Health Care Reform Bill as it relates to hospice patients. As hospice and palliative medicine physicians, let us clarify. The bill does NOT replace physicians with physician assistants in overseeing care for hospice patients. It simply allows a physician assistants to do what a nurse practitioner has been able to do for the past two years - serve as the "attending physician" according to Medicare guidelines and where consistent with state regulations. In the past, Medicare has defined an attending physician as a physician or nurse practitioner; this bill adds physician assistant to that list. We support this provision as physician assistants play a vital role in our team approach to delivering quality palliative care to our patients. The authority to certify an individual as terminally ill and oversee hospice care continues to rest with physicians only.

To learn more, see Sec. 1114 on pages 391-393 of HR 3962.

Sincerely,

Gail Austin Cooney, MD FAAHPM
President, American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine

Sean Morrison, MD
President Elect, American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
Director, National Palliative Care Research Center; Hermann Merkin Professor of Palliative Care, Professor of Geriatrics and Medicine, Vice-Chair for Research, Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Adult Development, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, NY

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