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**For Immediate Release**

**Coalition Seeks Partnership with CMS to Ensure Access to Power Mobility  
Equipment for Americans with Disabilities**

**WASHINGTON** – The Power Mobility Coalition (PMC), a coalition of small and large power mobility suppliers and manufacturers, called on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to rely on the judgment of treating physicians and partner with patients, medical professionals and industry to make certain that Americans with serious disabilities have access to power mobility equipment.

Criteria used by CMS to determine eligibility for power mobility benefits under Medicare has been in doubt since last December, when program administrators announced sharp restrictions on the number of steps a patient could take and still be eligible for reimbursement. A CMS decision in late March to rescind the December announcement added to the confusion by not specifying clear and consistent guidelines for reimbursement.

In a [letter to CMS Administrator Dr. Mark McClellan](#), PMC Director Eric Sokol said that government personnel, in reviewing Medicare mobility equipment claims, should not second-guess the judgment of treating physicians. "We strongly recommend that CMS rely on the knowledge of the treating physician and the physician-signed Certificate of Medical Necessity (CMN) to make determinations as to eligibility for power wheelchairs," Sokol said, adding, "This will instill a measure of consistency and fairness into the claims approval process while ensuring that eligible beneficiaries receive appropriate services."

Sokol warned against permitting federal claims personnel to over-ride the judgment of physicians treating potentially life-threatening illnesses such as congestive heart failure. Government data show that congestive heart failure affects almost 5 million Americans, causing 260,000 deaths and 962,000 hospitalizations per year. "Treating physicians, rather than federal agency staff, who have never examined the patient, are in the best position to determine the need for power mobility among those who otherwise may be unable to live independently, including the 65,000 Americans with congestive heart failure who require home health care," he stated.

Sokol commended Dr. McClellan for deciding to host a Special Open Door Forum on June 14th, calling the session a positive step in the ongoing discussion about how beneficiaries can be given necessary access to power mobility equipment. Sokol urged that any revision of the CMN be based on functional ambulation and that a beneficiary be deemed "bed or chair-confined" if they need a power chair to move about the residence and perform activities of daily living.

"As you work to develop clear and specific eligibility criteria, the PMC respectfully requests that CMS make clear that under the revised CMN, a beneficiary will be considered non ambulatory if he/she needs power mobility in order to move about their residence and accomplish their activities of daily living (ADLs). This ambulation standard, consistent with sound medical practice, was recently advocated by

clinicians at The University of Pittsburgh School of Health and Rehabilitation Services who state that ‘the documented assessment of functional ambulation require an evaluation of whether a recipient is able to walk the distances necessary to complete the individual’s activities of daily living, in each of the environments the individual would encounter in the course of those duties.’”

On behalf of PMC, Sokol expressed support for many of the provisions in CMS’ recently released three-prong initiative on power wheelchair coverage and payment policy. Having long advocated the need for mandatory accreditation, Sokol concluded, "we look forward to working with you and CMS to develop an accreditation program and quality standards for all durable medical equipment suppliers as mandated by the Medicare Modernization Act.”

*The Power Mobility Coalition (PMC) is an association of suppliers and manufacturers who provide services and mobility equipment such as motorized wheelchairs and scooters, to beneficiaries nationwide. For more information on the Power Mobility Coalition, please visit our web site at [www.pmcoalition.org](http://www.pmcoalition.org).*