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**For Immediate Release**

**Coalition to CMS: Let Physicians Decide Who Needs Power Wheelchairs Based on Patients' Ability to Safely Move About Their Homes**

Washington, DC -- The Power Mobility Coalition (PMC), an association of power mobility manufacturers and suppliers, today urged the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to make "functional ambulation" and a physician-signed Certificate of Medical Necessity (CMN), the key criteria in determining eligibility for the Medicare power wheelchair benefit.

In remarks prepared for delivery at a CMS Open Door Forum in Washington, DC, PMC Director Eric W. Sokol said, "Medicare must provide clear and consistent clinical guidance to make certain that people suffering from disabilities such as cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, spinal injuries and congestive heart failure will remain eligible for motorized wheelchairs under Medicare."

"PMC strongly believes that any revision of the CMN or future guidelines to determine eligibility for power wheelchairs must be based on a functional ambulation standard," he said.

Sokol pointed to the State of Pennsylvania Medicaid program's definition of ambulation as model language CMS should use to inform physicians, clinicians and suppliers of what "functional ambulation" means. The Pennsylvania definition says, in part, "Functional ambulation means the ability to walk so as to engage in day-to-day domestic, vocational and social activities." [In a letter dated December 23, 2003, to the Medical Director of Medicare's Region A Durable Medical Equipment Regional Carrier, clinicians at the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health also endorsed an eligibility standard based on functional ambulation.](#)

On December 9, 2003, in an effort to combat fraud within the wheelchair program, CMS contractors announced sharp new restrictions on eligibility for reimbursement of Medicare power mobility claims. Under pressure from patient advocates, medical professionals and others, CMS publicly rescinded the December announcement and is now seeking to develop new clinical guidance for healthcare providers.

In renewing PMC's offer to assist CMS in developing new quality standards and eligibility guidelines, Sokol said "The right way to fight fraud in the Medicare program is to set strong industry standards, including mandatory accreditation of suppliers, not to second-guess the judgment of the treating physician and certainly not to deny access to people who need power mobility to live independently."

"The fact is that access to power mobility saves the Medicare program resources by allowing those with mobility needs to stay healthy and to live fuller, more active lives, resulting in fewer hospitalizations and less need for institutional care," he said.

For additional information concerning the Power Mobility Coalition and today's Open Door Forum, please visit the PMC's website at [www.pmcoalition.org](http://www.pmcoalition.org).

*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.*