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**PMC FAULTS OIG FOR COMPARING MEDICARE PRICING TO INTERNET PRICING**

*Comparison Fails to Take Into Account Medicare Standards and Other Program Integrity Safeguards that Ensure Beneficiary Quality and Supplier Validity*

(WASHINGTON, DC)-The Power Mobility Coalition (PMC) today expressed disappointment in a study recently released by the US Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General (OIG) which found that prices for power wheelchairs from internet based suppliers were 45% lower than power chairs reimbursed by Medicare.

The PMC, a nationwide association of manufacturers and suppliers of power mobility devices (PMDs) for use by the disabled and senior populations, noted that internet based suppliers are not subject to Medicare regulations and are not accountable to any outside agency.

Under current Medicare law, it is highly unlikely that any internet based supplier could meet existing Medicare requirements that prohibit "drop shipping" of product. Moreover, internet pricing fails to take into account delivery costs, on site patient and home assessment, billing, repair and service. The study also fails to discuss the quality of product found on the internet, identify which internet based suppliers were used as data in the report or the validity of these vendors.

"If CMS is truly concerned about unscrupulous actors, quality of patient care and moving toward increasing standards and accreditation, internet based suppliers should not be held as the

standard,” stated PMC Director Eric Sokol. “Internet based suppliers are not responsible or accountable; do not comply with Medicare conditions of participation or quality standards. Simply put, they are not places where the Medicare program should be looking to compare costs for high quality power wheelchairs supplied by caring, competent and lawful suppliers who comply with Medicare quality standards.”

The PMC urges all Medicare beneficiaries to obtain life-enhancing durable medical equipment (DME) from a Medicare certified supplier, not a supplier with only an internet presence. As PMC Counsel Stephen Azia explains, “Medicare beneficiaries deserve high quality equipment from verified and reputable suppliers who have a reputation in the community and will be available to them if they have issues with service or proper fitting. The business model of internet based suppliers is based on providing a bare-bones product to beneficiaries and then leaving them to their own devices if they need any instruction, service or repair.”

The PMC continually calls for greater accountability and is pressing CMS to mandate accreditation for all DME suppliers which was required by the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003. Instead, the OIG seems to be insinuating that price be the main driver of providing DME to Medicare beneficiaries at the expense of quality, accountability and service. As PMC Director Sokol sums it up, “Our seniors deserve better.”

The OIG report entitled, *A Comparison of Medicare Program and Consumer Internet Prices for Power Wheelchairs*, can be found at: <http://www.oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-04-07-00160.pdf>.

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*The Power Mobility Coalition (PMC) is a nationwide association of manufacturers and suppliers of motorized wheelchairs and power operated vehicles based in Washington, DC.*