

Timely Member Communication Required for Legislative Success

by **Russ Bodoff**

NHIA President



I am certain that each of you has been reading and hearing about the many pressing discussions taking place on Capitol Hill related to health care reform. Without question, these deliberations are becoming very political and are having a significant impact on our legislative efforts to successfully advocate for passage of H.R. 574 and S. 254, the *Medicare Home Infusion Therapy Coverage Act of 2009*.

This historic health care debate is sure to have numerous implications for the home infusion field—including the potential directions that any emerging “public health insurance plan” may go in. If, for example, the President compels Congress to move forward on a public insurance option, we **all** must closely monitor and actively influence what that may mean for our field and for our patients, as the specific details unfold. Will the public plan cover home infusion reimbursement the way the private payers do—or will it be modeled after Medicare reimbursement policies, as they presently exist?

The gravity of this issue alone is enormous. Just imagine the harm if today’s Medicare coverage becomes the model—and the tens of thousands of patients who are in the public plan are denied access to meaningful reimbursement for home infusion therapy. A new reality like this could actually dwarf the Medicare challenge we already face.

Obviously, all of the above concerns point decisively to the need for NHIA to further increase its legislative efforts, while maintaining a constant stream of targeted information and strategic guidance back to the NHIA membership so as to ensure thriving grassroots activities. However, even as the necessity for advocacy-related communications is on the rise, we are discovering alarming challenges in this regard:

- Based upon an association survey conducted in 2008, NHIA members overwhelmingly reported they prefer e-mail communication over snail mail for the speed and ease of receipt.
- Despite such feedback, we are encountering the troubling problem that a majority of the professionals listed in our membership database are frequently not opening these vital e-mails we are sending out.
- I know everyone has too much work on their plate and little time for “frivolous” e-mails—but let me assure you that the electronic communications from NHIA are not frivolous.
- They impact the future of your company, your skills and knowledge as professionals, and our ability to effectively collaborate together for grassroots success.
- Recently, we’ve had two urgent advocacy communications with the NHIA membership about our home infusion Medicare legislative fix, where vast member actions were needed to help move the legislative efforts forward.
- Speaking frankly, I am disappointed to say that in each case only about 35% of the members opened their e-mail—and then only a smaller percentage clicked on crucial links.

It is possible, depending upon your company’s e-mail system, that our NHIA e-mail may get caught in your spam filter—and if so, that is easily fixed by white listing or approving mail from NHIA. If the problem is not technical, then I strongly urge all of you to place a higher level of importance on the NHIA e-mail communications. We can only be successful with Congress if we **all** work together. Regardless of how many long hours the NHIA staff and/or an undersized number of dedicated NHIA members may work to tell the home infusion story to our elected representatives, the tipping point we require on Capitol Hill can only be attained by even greater member participation.

Truly, our only path for legislative success lies in **all** of us working together—and timely communication is at the very heart of that collaboration. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Regards,

