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**MEN'S HEALTH NETWORK AND PROSTATE CANCER ADVOCATES SUPPORT  
REIMBURSEMENT FOR ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION TREATMENT**

**WASHINGTON, DC – September 12, 2005** – U. S. Senators and Congressmen on key Finance, Appropriations, and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committees today were presented with arguments against proposed language that would eliminate Medicare and Medicaid funding for erectile dysfunction medications.

Prepared by the Men's Health Network, the package contained a coalition letter supporting reimbursement for Erectile Dysfunction treatments in all publicly funded programs (including Medicare and Medicaid), and a letter from a prostate cancer survivor and his spouse, Barbara and Ralph Alterowitz, along with a copy of their book, *Intimacy with Impotence – The Couple's Guide to Better Sex After Prostate Disease*.

The patient advocates and Men's Health Network urge Senators to vote against the amendment. They argue that, while recent news has often focused on use of erectile dysfunction medications to enhance recreational sex, and even use by convicted sex offenders, for 17 million men impotence is a tragic consequence of disease or disease treatment. The supposed cost savings from eliminating coverage of erectile dysfunction drugs, they further argue, will be far outweighed by higher costs for medical and social service care for those men whose impotence leads to depression and estrangement from their partner and other health problems. The package points out the following facts:

1. Although 30 million men have impotence problems, more than half have erectile dysfunction from cancer treatment and various illnesses: 4 million from treatments for prostate and colorectal cancers and 13 million from other diseases and/or treatment of diseases (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, depression and hypertension).
2. For the 30 million men suffering from impotence, almost 30 million partners are also affected. The majority of these couples are covered by Medicare.

3. Men who suffer from erectile dysfunction are likely to develop depression, become preoccupied with the issue, become emotionally disconnected from their partners and, if they still work, see their productivity diminish. They are also more likely to develop other health problems.

4. A good physical relationship is the private preserve of a couple, and an essential part of a marriage. Men who have a happy, loving relationship with a life partner have a better chance of recovery from cancer, increased longevity, improved overall well being and greater productivity. Consequently, they require less medical care and thus lower medical costs.

Therefore, if Congress votes to eliminate reimbursement for erectile dysfunction drugs, it will be trading off the cost of these drugs for the larger costs of treating the resulting consequences. The Alterowitz' elaborate: "We try to open people's eyes to the fact that you can have wonderful erection-free sex. But many are not aware or willing to give that approach a try. Are we going to deny them the chance to see whether one of the potency drugs can improve the couple's quality of life? In a long-term relationship, sex is the physical expression of emotional intimacy. Knowing how deeply relationships are affected when physical intimacy falls by the wayside, and what a profound impact that has on the man's overall health, classifying the potency medications as lifestyle drugs for patients with an underlying disease or physical condition that causes impotence would be a fool's calculation. It will cost more to pay for the medical bills of men who feel depressed and miserable, and disconnected from their wives, than to pay for their erectile dysfunction drugs."

Men's Health Network is a non-profit educational organization committed to improving the health and wellness of men through education campaigns, partnerships with retailers and other private entities, workplace health programs, data collection, and work with health care providers to provide better programs and funding for men's health needs.

Ralph and Barbara Alterowitz survived prostate cancer and its consequences and have become patient advocates. They are sex counselors certified by the American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists, and are authors of *The Lovin' Ain't Over* and *Intimacy with Impotence – The Couple's Guide to Better Sex After Prostate Disease* (2004-Da Capo Press), as well as numerous other pieces that can be found on [www.renewintimacy.org](http://www.renewintimacy.org). Their next publication is "Sexual Rehabilitation After Cancer," a chapter in the forthcoming 4-volume professional reference "Sexual Health." They live in Potomac, Maryland, and travel throughout the country talking to couples' and men's support groups for those who suffer from impotence or its underlying causes.