

Lawmakers get primer on ABCs of pediatrics

BY THERESA FLAHERTY Managing Editor

WASHINGTON – When it comes to healthcare reform and HME, most of the discussion centers on senior citizens. That worries Susan Wingert, founder and president of Roseville, Minn.-based Pediatric Home Services, which offers respiratory and infusion services for medically fragile children. Wingert spoke with HME News recently about the importance of including pediatrics in healthcare reform.

HME NEWS: You traveled to Washington in October to speak with lawmakers about pediatric patients.

Susan Wingert: One of the things that has concerned us is the only thing they have really talked about is the Medicare model. The Medicare model is wonderful for the geriatric population. But it is not for small children and infants. It never was intended to be and it won't work.

HME: Are pediatric patients overlooked in the healthcare reform bills?

Wingert: We have a committee on health care that peruses all of these bills and we have not been able to find any current bill that speaks to how they plan on dealing with the medically fragile child. It's a very small population and when you are looking at the grand scheme of things, it's probably not even 1/10 of 1% of the healthcare dollars.

HME: Do you take Medicare?

Wingert: One of the biggest decisions we've made is to not take care Medicare. Oxygen saturations of 85% on a child can cause horrific developmental problems and even death. We didn't have the skill in working with Medicare to figure out how to fight those things.



SUSAN WINGERT, second from right, and other employees of Pediatric Home Services met with lawmakers like Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., in October.

HME: Is patient access a concern for the pediatric population?

Wingert: About 35% of our patients live outside of the metropolitan area that we serve. If they continue to ratchet down reimbursement we will have to reduce our service area. That 35% will have to be readmitted to a hospital. Why should a rural child have less opportunity to live in a warm loving family than a metropolitan child simply because of where they live? **HME**

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from the January 2010 issue.

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