

ABHC

Alliance for Better Health Care

September 30, 2008

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chairman
Senate Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus and Chairman Conrad;

The undersigned members of the Alliance for Better Health Care (ABHC) would like to thank you for introducing the Comparative Effectiveness Research Act of 2008, S. 3408, which would create an independent entity to conduct and disseminate comparative effectiveness research. The ABHC is a coalition of organizations representing consumers, employers, health care providers, health plans, pharmacists, researchers, unions, pharmaceutical benefit managers, and other interested stakeholders that believe—as you do—high quality health care requires sound evidence to improve medical decision-making.

ABHC believes that greater investments in CER now will help us move toward a high quality, cost-effective, and efficient health care system. As you may know, the ABHC developed the following principles for prioritizing, conducting, validating, disseminating, and using CER to inform ongoing policy discussions.

- CER has the potential to benefit the health of all Americans and is a true public good.
- Significant and stable investment is needed in CER—in the development of research methods and researchers, the design and conduct of studies, the scientific review of research, and the dissemination and communication of results—for it to reach its full potential.
- The scope of CER should address the full spectrum of health care treatments, including pharmaceuticals, devices, medical and surgical procedures, and other interventions.
- Scientific integrity and independence are paramount.
- CER should be based on scientific evidence employing an array of appropriate methods, such as randomized clinical control trials, observational studies, meta-analyses, and systematic technology assessment reviews.

- The processes for identifying research priorities, conducting research, validating the science, and disseminating results should be transparent.
- Any entity that commissions or conducts CER should involve stakeholders in setting research priorities and disseminating research.
- Board governance should assure accountability in the conduct and dissemination of comparative effectiveness research.

CER holds the promise of improving health care quality and outcomes for all patients, but this can only be achieved if it is sound and trusted. It is imperative that legislation to expand our nation's CER portfolio include these basic principles. We thank you for recognizing the importance of our priorities by including elements of these principles in your legislation.

ABHC looks forward to working with you as your legislation moves forward. If you have any questions, please contact Anna Schwamlein Howard by phone at 202.434.3793 or by e-mail at ashoward@aarp.org.

Sincerely,

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Alliance of Community Health Plans • American Osteopathic Association
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BlueCross BlueShield Association • Blue Shield of California
Coalition for Health Services Research • CVS Caremark • Express Scripts •
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