



**American Dietetic Association**  
**Your link to nutrition and health.<sup>sm</sup>**

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March 11, 2003

The Honorable Nancy Johnson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Fred Upton  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Larry Craig  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sherrod Brown  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators and Representatives:

Once again we thank you for your leadership in authoring and supporting legislation that provides America's senior citizens with access to medical nutrition therapy (MNT) to assist them in managing diabetes and kidney disease. Your leadership in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress made Medicare MNT a reality.

Creating this Medicare benefit was a notable achievement for the nation, our seniors who rely on the Medicare program for their health care and for the dietetics profession. Upon the first anniversary of the benefit, we can report that as many as 10,000 individuals were referred by their physicians to registered dietitians using medical nutrition therapy to manage their disease and prevent further complications. The odds are that those who received MNT services were less likely to be hospitalized, require as many medications, or experience complications from their conditions.

According to data obtained and analyzed by the American Dietetic Association, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) paid approximately \$800,000 in 2002 for MNT services provided to individuals and groups. Although data are not complete, it appears that doctors anywhere in the United States could refer patients to local RDs enrolled as Medicare providers – as Congress envisioned.

The new law is a significant advancement in the U.S. health care system. It is an initial step toward management – rather than simple treatment – of disease. The implications of that shift are enormous to patients and to the taxpayer. As Congress and the administration consider next steps for Medicare MNT, they may consider that nutritional interventions for heart disease also are cost effective. Medical nutrition therapy for cardiovascular disease has proven results of fewer hospitalizations and lower incidence of complications. In addition, studies on the impact of dietary interventions on cardiovascular risk factors in men showed that for every \$1 spent on MNT, there is a \$3 to \$10 cost savings realized by reducing the need for drug therapy.

Medical nutrition therapy provides testimony that not only is disease management possible – it is practical. In sharing these facts with you, we thank you again for your leadership over the years in guiding sound health policies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie O'Sullivan Maillet".  
JULIE O'SULLIVAN MAILLET, PhD, RD  
President