

“Competitive” Bidding May Hurt Seniors

(NAPSA)—Many Americans are taking their health care into their own hands in a surprising way.

They're calling Congress at (202) 224-3121 and asking their representatives what's being done about Medicare's bidding program for durable medical equipment and services. This type of equipment, which includes oxygen, hospital beds and wheelchairs, helps to keep seniors and people with disabilities safe and independent at home. The current system has alarmed patients and policy experts alike.



Two dozen patient groups and hundreds of experts have urged Congress to stop the Medicare bidding program and find other ways to save money.

Durable or home medical equipment and services also help control health care spending by preventing costly stays in emergency rooms, hospitals and nursing homes. Hundreds of patients, however, say Medicare's bidding program makes it harder to get medically required equipment and limits the choices of equipment and providers.

A recent study in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* found that the system “fails to generate competitive prices of goods and fails to satisfy demand.”

More about this issue and home care in general is at the American Association for Home-care site: <http://action.aahomecare.org>.