

**Report of the Deliberations of the Coverage and Reimbursement Task Force**  
*Cynthia Berry, J.D.*

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DR. TUCKSON: Well, listen, let me get everybody back and thank you. For the record, the ex officios had to buy their own food. I get all these new challenges when I come into the job. It's incredible.

We want to get started on the next session. We're a little behind time. The committee remembers that at the March priority-setting meeting, we identified coverage and reimbursement of genetic technologies and services as a high priority issue requiring in-depth study. At the June meeting, the committee considered a preliminary draft report on coverage and reimbursement which was revised over the last couple of months.

Let me just say I want to really, really thank the staff for these revisions. While the report still will be revised further, there has been a considerable enhancement of an already very good piece. But they have really, really changed the report. I can see a significant improvement as they have listened to the inputs from lots of different stakeholders in this. It now includes revisions that they have worked with that they have received since June. The revised report is in Tab 5 of the briefing book.

Cindy Berry really needs to be thanked for her leadership on this, as well as Debra Leonard, Emily Winn-Deen, Muin Khoury, and Sean Tunis from CMS. I really want to thank Suzanne as well as Amanda for their staff support.

So to lead us through this discussion, I'm really pleased to ask Cindy to take it away.

MS. BERRY: Thanks, Reed.

I want to echo Reed's word of thanks to the staff, because this was an enormous undertaking. Reports of this magnitude don't just appear mysteriously. To my knowledge, they haven't invented a machine that will take down everybody's comments and then synthesize it and make sure everything is grammatically correct and organized and insightful. That is something that the staff did, and we owe them a debt of gratitude because there is no way that any committee can draft a document such as this in the amount of time that it has taken and produce the results that these folks have produced.

So Sarah, Suzanne, Amanda, Fay and others, incredible job.

I'm going to switch these two, the report purpose and goal. I'll start with the goal, really to improve access to genetic technologies, genetic services, genetic tests in particular. We have in there the word "appropriate," and that is key because no one here is suggesting that all genetic tests and services should be paid for and covered no matter what. We're talking about appropriate coverage and appropriate reimbursement, and that is the overarching goal, one of the goals of this committee.

So to that end we said, as you'll recall from previous meetings, how can we do that? How can we accomplish that? What are the barriers to achieving that goal? Two of the largest barriers really have to do with coverage and reimbursement. In many cases there is inadequate, insufficient, or non-existent coverage of genetic tests and services, and to the extent that some are covered, the reimbursement is not adequate and is a further barrier to access.

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So the goal of the report or the purpose of the report is to sort of do a comprehensive analysis of the state of play with regard to coverage and reimbursement, and then offer recommendations to address the discrete barriers to access and the problems that we identify with regard to coverage and reimbursement.

As you'll recall, at the June meeting we did take a look at a first draft of the report, and we had a robust discussion, but we didn't finish the discussion because there are so many issues involved with coverage and reimbursement. We didn't get too far, so the suggestion was made, and we implemented it, to form a coverage and reimbursement task force which would be tasked with further examining the report, the objectives, the barriers, revise the report based on some of the recommendations we heard at the meeting, based on input from members of the public.

We held a task force meeting on September the 8th to further delve into the issues that we identified and recommended some additional deliberations. This is the task force. Then our September 8th meeting consisted of the following participants. We had some outside folks because we had a lot of questions in terms of how operationally genetic tests are actually provided, the reimbursement issues, what are the challenges there. So we had a lot of questions. Based on that input, further revisions were made to the draft report that you already saw.

These were the goals of the meeting, develop some concrete recommendations for the full committee to consider. The task force did not want to and did not attempt to say we're going to just come up with recommendations and everyone is going to bless them. Not at all. What we were doing is developing a list of possible recommendations for the full committee's consideration, and you'll see as we go through the report, and if you already read the report you'll see that there are numerous recommendations under certain sections. Some are additive, some are somewhat mutually exclusive, and in some cases we really didn't have any recommendations.

The purpose of today's session and tomorrow's session is to really get everyone's input on the committee, ex officio members, and members of the public so that we can come up with very thoughtful, concrete, and productive recommendations to addressing some of the barriers that we identify.

A final goal of the September meeting was to plan this session.