

Physicians

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Locations

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IMPORTANT PATIENT NOTIFICATION: AI-Driven Changes to Your Medicare Coverage

Date: February 16, 2026

From: AZ Pain Doctors (Drs. Hogan, Pico, Saran, Smith, Sharma, Roth, and Ray).

Subject: Impact of the Medicare "WISeR" Program and Zyter on Your Care

Dear Patient,

At AZ Pain Doctors, we are committed to providing you with the most effective treatments for your acute and chronic pain. We are writing to alert you to a new federal pilot Program called **WISeR** (Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction) that is significantly changing how traditional Medicare operates in our state.

We want you to understand what is happening with certain procedures that, prior to such Program, were not problematic insofar as authorizations for procedures that your physicians determine to be medically necessary. This communication is not intended to suggest that the WISeR Program is not in patients' best interests; rather, we wanted you to be informed that this Program and its implementation in Arizona using Zyter has been frustrating to many patients and to us.

What is the WISeR Program?

Launched on January 1, 2026, the WISeR program is a six-year pilot designed by Medicare to reduce costs. Unlike the traditional Medicare you have used in the past, this program introduces **Prior Authorization**—a requirement that we must get "permission" from a third-party company before we can perform certain procedures. WISeR is being trialed in only the states of AZ, NJ, OH, OK, TX, and Washington state.

Who is Zyter and How is AI Affecting Your Care?

Medicare has hired a private technology contractor named **Zyter** to manage these approvals (the Prior Authorizations) in the state of Arizona.

Phone 602-795-8700 | **Fax** 602-795-8701 | **Web** azpaindoctors.com

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The other pilot states have different technology contractors and we understand that patients in those states are not encountering the same denials for Prior Authorizations that we are experiencing in Arizona.. Arizona is the only state where Medicare is utilizing Zyter. Zyter uses **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning algorithms** to review our medical requests. We have identified several ways this Program (mainly its implementation using Zyter) new system is having a significant impact on your care and rights as a Medicare patient:

- **Algorithmic Denials:** Zyter's AI screens requests against rigid data patterns. Because an algorithm cannot see or speak to you, it may deny a procedure that your doctor has determined is medically necessary based on your unique physical condition and pain history. All of these contractors must follow Medicare's rules called Local Carrier Determinants or LCDs. Our practice and other practices in Arizona are noticing that many of the denials issued by Zyter are for reasons that are NOT required by Medicare in their LCD for Arizona patients. In other words, Zyter denies authorizations for procedures that we find to be medically necessary even when the LCDs are satisfied.
- **Significant Treatment Delays:** Even if a procedure is eventually approved, the requirement to submit documentation and wait for an AI-driven "affirmation" creates a new administrative hurdle. This often leads to delays of several days or even weeks before we can get you on the schedule for relief. When Zyter's AI tool denies your procedure, we are required under the Program to call them to speak with someone, and telephone "hold" times can be as long as two hours. We have had to engage an entire employee for two hours to try and overcome Zyter's denials (some of which are inappropriate) of your procedures that were created using AI software.
- **Incentivized Denials:** Under the federal contract, companies like Zyter are eligible to receive a percentage of the "savings" generated when procedures are averted or denied. This, in our minds, creates a concerning conflict of interest where a computer program is used to justify reducing your access to treatment. The more treatments Zyter denies, the more they are potentially paid in bonuses.

Procedures Currently Targeted

The WISeR program specifically targets many of the most effective interventional pain treatments, including:

- **Epidural Steroid Injections (ESIs)**
- **Spinal Cord Stimulator Implants** (Electrical Nerve Stimulators)

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- **Image-Guided Lumbar Decompression** (for Spinal Stenosis)
- **Vertebral Augmentation** (for Compression Fractures)

Our Commitment to You

We believe that medical decisions should be made by doctors and patients, not by algorithms. When Zyter issues a denial, we have and will continue to:

1. **Challenge the AI decision** through a time consuming and resource (employee time) consuming manual appeal process.
2. **Request "Peer-to-Peer" reviews** of their AI generated denials to ensure a human clinician—not just a computer—reviews your medical records.
3. **Document the impact** of these delays on your quality of life.
4. **We are working with other pain management practices who are members of the Arizona Society of Interventional Pain Physicians (AZSIPP)** to contact Zyter's legal counsel, state medical associations, state medical boards, and our AZ state and federal legislators.

How You Can Help

If your care is delayed or denied, your voice is powerful. You have the right to contact Medicare directly at **1-800-MEDICARE** to file a complaint regarding the WISER program's impact on your health.

<https://www.medicare.gov/my/medicare-complaint/step1>

Please let them know that "Zyter" is the only contractor in Arizona and Arizona is having difficulties that other pilot states are not having. You may also contact your local Congressional representatives to express your concern about the use of AI to manage your Medicare benefits.

You can find your House of Representatives Congressman/woman here:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

You can find your Arizona Senator here:

<https://www.senate.gov/states/AZ/intro.htm>

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We will continue to navigate these new hurdles to ensure you receive the care you deserve. If you have questions about an upcoming appointment, please call our office at 602-795-8700. Please know that these frustrating changes are not unique to our practice, it impacts all pain management practices in Arizona, but that we are working together to do the best we possibly can to advocate for you.

Sincerely,

Your team at AZ Pain Doctors