



REPRESENTATION

Highlights from AMA Interim meeting

Priorities: Medicare audits; professional liability; and bioterrorism

CMS PHYSICIANS WERE AMONG THE 1000 plus delegates and alternate delegates who flocked to San Francisco for the 55th Interim Meeting of the AMA House of Delegates. Held in early December, the meeting featured five days of policy-setting activities to

help guide physicians and the medical community.

In an opening address to the AMA House of Delegates, President Richard F. Corlin, MD, outlined several of the AMA's priorities. These include ensuring physicians are given process protection for Medicare audits; addressing the growing professional liability crisis, advocating for a non-political look at the state of gun-related deaths and injuries using a public health model, and serving as a leader in the field of biological threats and terrorism.

The AMA devoted a major portion of its Interim Meeting to discussions about bioterrorism, offering more than seven hours of educational sessions on the topic. That information will be available at www.ama-assn.org. The bioterrorism agenda also included a videotaped speech by Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson and an address from Surgeon General David Satcher, MD.

The delegates were also introduced to the new AMA Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer Michael D. Maves, MD. Dr. Maves will assume leadership of the AMA on Jan. 15.

Among the many issues debated were financial incentives for organ donation, establishing a national registry of medical experts, marketing and research by pharmaceutical companies, the Medicare conversion factor, health care parity for domestic partnerships, physician prescribing data, tort reform, resident/fellow work and learning environment, intern and resident working hours, smallpox and flu vaccine, drug and vaccine shortages and disaster preparedness.

Some members again said they would like the

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Scott Warner

CMS co-sponsors population-based medicine forum at UIC

Susan Scrimshaw, PhD, (left), dean of the University of Illinois School of Public Health, joined Matthew Guidry, PhD, senior health policy advisor to the assistant secretary for Health and Human Services, and Susan Levy, PhD, director of the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Center at UIC, for a half-day forum on population-based medicine. CMS co-sponsored the event, which was held in November. Coverage will appear in a future issue of *Chicago Medicine*.

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AMA to look into legal remedies to protect the privacy of their prescribing habits. (A measure passed at last year's meeting directed the leadership to prevent profiling of doctors.) In response, the AMA has said it would meet with pharmaceutical companies to present guidelines and encourage salespeople to use data responsibly.

The HOD voted to delay action on whether to study paying the dying and their families to donate organs for transplant. The 549-member HOD narrowly defeated the measure, which would have launched a scientific study to determine how financial incentives would affect the donation process.

The HOD also granted itself more power to improve the work environment of resident physicians. It passed a resolution giving the organization the authority to draft, modify, or oppose legislation and pursue regulatory and administrative strategies concerning resident work hours and conditions.

CMS members attending included Drs.

Edmund R. Donoghue, CMS president; Richard A. Geline, president-elect; Charles Drueck III, immediate past president; Janis M. Orłowski, past president; Shastri Swaminathan, trustee; Neil E. Winston, chairman of the Council; and Joseph L. Murphy, past president.

The Prompt Pay Act— Are third-party payors complying?

ARE INSURERS COMPLYING WITH PROVISIONS of the Prompt Pay Law? Are they paying claims within 30 days and paying interest above \$1 for late claims? These questions came up at the Nov. 13 CMS Council meeting during debate over a resolution to amend the Prompt Pay Act. Some members believe that managed care organizations, PHOs and IPAs have failed to comply with the Act. In an effort to investigate the frequency and extent of such cases, CMS and ISMS are now collecting data to determine how widespread the problem is. *If you have a situation to report, please call Katie Brown at (312) 670-2550, ext. 328, or e-mail at kbrown@cmsdocs.org*

Major victory in regulatory relief bill

A UNANIMOUS VOTE (408 TO 0) BY THE House of Representatives to pass the Medicare Regulatory and Contracting Reform Act of 2001 gives physicians something to cheer about this holiday season. In brief, this Act will ensure that:

- Physicians will be able to repay any money they owe from an audit in installments instead of having to comply with carriers demanding that they pay in full in 30 days.
- Limits will be placed on carriers' use of extrapolation and prepayment review.
- Carriers will have to give physicians clear, concise and accurate answers to their questions and provide their names. They will not be able to target physicians for audits because of their participation in educational programs.

- Any new Evaluation and Management documentation guidelines will have to be pilot-tested before they can be put in place across the country.
- All services required by the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act will be covered by Medicare.

"This bill could not have gotten through the House without the relentless efforts of the AMA and all of the specialty and state medical societies working together to deliver a unified message to Congress," said AMA President Richard F. Corlin, MD. "We look forward to working with the U.S. Senate in addressing this important issue and making sure this bill becomes law this year."

Source: American Medical Association

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR BRANCH AND SPECIALTY SOCIETY MEETINGS

Thursday, Jan. 3, 2002
North Side Branch

Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2002
North Shore Branch

Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2002
Chicago Gynecological Society

Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2002
Southern Cook County Branch

Wednesday, Jan. 23, 2002
Northwest Branch

Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2002
West Side Branch

Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2002
Student Branch

Wednesday, Feb. 13, 2002
Southeastern Branch

Wednesday, Feb. 13, 2002
Student Branch

Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2002
North Shore Branch

Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2002
Chicago Gynecological Society

The above meeting dates, current at press time, are subject to change. Please refer to your mailed meeting notice for full details (i.e., cost, date, time, topic, location, etc.) and to confirm dates; or visit our web site at www.cmsdocs.org. Detailed listings also appear in Chicago Medicine.

Find us online at CMS Internet address www.cmsdocs.org



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