



SPRINGFIELD UPDATE

Delegates from Cook County focus on policies at HOD meeting



Photos: Scott Warner

THE ILLINOIS State Medical Society House of Delegates (HOD) met April 27-29, 2001, at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield, Illinois, to shape the organization's policy agenda for the upcoming year.

From "Opposition to Pharmacy Risk" to "Deductibility of Student Loan Interest," to "Health Concerns Related to Non-Migratory Canadian Geese" (or "goose poop"), delegates weighed in on nearly 80 resolutions. They also learned the latest on proposed Fairness in Contracting legislation and the Kaiser et al v. CIGNA class-action lawsuit (see Dr. Drueck's presidential perspective in the May issue of *Chicago Medicine*).

Two events were held in conjunction with the meeting: the President's Reception honoring outgoing ISMS President M. LeRoy Sprang, MD, and the 100th Anniversary of the Sangamon County (Springfield) Medical

Society. Festivities took place in the Crowne Plaza and at the Governor's Mansion in downtown Springfield.

Georgetown University bioethicist Dr. Edmund Pellegrino discussed physician ethics and medical societies. From Socrates to the present, he traced the evolution of physicians from revered medical professionals to their new status as employees.

The location of future meetings remains undecided. The Downstate caucus introduced a resolution calling for the HOD meeting to be held in Springfield at least once every three years. This resolution was referred to the Board of Trustees for study.

In addition to the 16 officers and trustees of ISMS from Cook County, 48 CMS delegates and alternate delegates attended as well as seven students. (CMS was allocated a total of 80 delegates.)

(Coverage continues on next page)

Quoting the Justice

"No one can represent physician interests and concern more effectively than you can. Physicians must take an active interest in the political process and become more involved in electing worthy candidates from the courthouses to the statehouse. Staying involved and active in medical society affairs is an excellent way to maintain a political voice."

—Illinois Supreme Court Justice Rita Garman, speaking before the ISMS Annual Public Affairs Breakfast at the HOD meeting.



Shown at the HOD meeting in Springfield are: Shaun R. Senter (left), a CMS Student Branch delegate, with John F. Schneider, MD, new president-elect, ISMS, and Cosmin Dobrescu, president, CMS Student Branch.

Resolutions

ISMS considered 11 resolutions brought on behalf of the Cook County delegation and voted to take the following actions:

● **Reimbursement for Physician Services**—*Adopted as Amended*

(To pursue means to secure reimbursement for time spent without direct physical contact by physicians and other providers, and to work with component societies to define coding to accomplish this.)

● **Health System Advertising**—*Adopted as Amended*

(To request AMA to establish guidelines on health-care advertising including pharmaceutical companies and prescription drugs.)

● **Motorcycle Helmets**—*Adopted as Amended*

(To adopt a policy in support of mandatory use of motorcycle helmets and support legislation that would accomplish this.)

● **Opposition to Pharmacy Risk**—*Referred to the Board*

(To support a statewide ban forbidding physicians and physician groups from participating in pharmacy risk sharing.)

● **Future Tobacco Settlement Funds to Go Toward Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Programs and Health Care**—*Not Adopted* (ISMS is already involved in this issue. See resolution on freezing tobacco settlement money on this page.)

(To adopt a policy that all tobacco settlement funds go toward tobacco cessation, prevention programs, and treatment and research of tobacco-related disease.)

● **Institute of Medicine for Medical Errors**—*Adopted*

(To evaluate and respond to the IOM report on medical errors, recent press releases and publications and to reassure the public of the medical profession's commitment to improving safety.)

● **Practicing Physicians in Managed Care**—*Adopted as Amended*

(To continue to encourage physicians to provide effective, necessary and quality medical care in a cost-effective manner, regardless of reimbursement.)

● **Malpractice Information on the Internet**—*Adopted as Amended*

(To oppose all efforts to release misleading malpractice data, which may be misinterpreted as a quality indicator.)

● **Automatic Down-coding of Claims**—*Adopted as Amended*

(To request the Department of Insurance to adopt regulations to make the practice of automatic down-coding claims illegal.)

● **Freeze Tobacco Settlement Money**—*Referred to Board*

(To work with the AMA to file a class-action lawsuit against the tobacco settlement calling for a freeze on tobacco settlement funds to attorneys and to redirect the funds to their original intent, health care. To inform legislators from Cook County and write to the media.)

● **Deductibility of Interest on Student Loans**—*Adopted*

(To support HR 436 and SB 152 to allow for a majority of students to qualify for tax deductions on interest paid on their student loans and to advise all medical students, residents and young physicians of this pending legislation.)



Enjoying a reception in the Governor's Mansion are, from left: Edgar A. Borda, MD, Joseph L. Murphy, MD, Mrs. M. LeRoy Sprang (Sandy), Dr. Sprang, Saroja Bharati, MD, and M. Anita Johnson, MD.

SPRINGFIELD REPORT *(continued)*



Leading the CMS Caucus at the HOD meeting are, from left, Drs. Charles Drucek, CMS president; Steven M. Malkin, trustee (at podium), who is reviewing reports and resolutions from one of the Reference Committees; Edmund Donoghue, CMS president-elect, and Peter E. Eupierre, secretary.



Janis M. Orłowski, MD, ISMS Board Chairman, discusses issues during the CMS Caucus. Waiting their turn at the mike are, from left: Drs. M. LeRoy Sprang, outgoing president ISMS, Shastri Swaminathan, Frank C. Madda and Harold C. Labinsky.

Quotes from Springfield

QUESTION FOR THE DELEGATES: What concept stood out most to you regarding this HOD meeting?

During the ISMS House of Delegates meeting in Springfield, held April 27-29, CMSnews asked members the above question. Here are their answers:

The process can work if we all get together and focus on the issues. We need to accomplish things in a very organized fashion with more light and less rancor. It's important to remember that the primary goal is to benefit our patients and to try to impact the health-care system in that regard.

Gerald E. Silverstein, MD
Internal medicine

I noticed a more collegial relationship and more cooperation than in the past. And there was a greater encompassing of the membership, especially with bringing in the views of the members from Downstate and the collar counties.

Bohdan A. Iwanetz, MD
General surgery

It was heartening to see the way physicians, through their CMS/ISMS membership, can make their collective voices heard politically among the competing voices in the health-care arena. Individually, we certainly cannot make an impact as remotely significant as we can collectively through CMS/ISMS. Rather than complain in the darkness, we should come together and have our opinions heard through the vehicle of organized medicine.

Thomas J. Chorba, MD
General surgery

From a student's point of view, this meeting has been very educational and eye-opening. Student turnout was good and enthusiasm was high. It's more important today than ever before for young physicians and physicians in training to take a personal interest in the future of the profession. ISMS serves as the strongest voice for change in the Midwest and we are privileged to partake of it. The students from CMS are fortunate to have such a conduit for their efforts and ideas.

Cosmin Dobrescu
President, CMS Student Branch

COMPLAINT DEPARTMENT

From the office of the insurance ombudsman...

Help us monitor non-provider complaints -- tell us how you've been treated

MANY PHYSICIANS KNOW HOW HARD it is to contract as a provider with various insurance companies. And a fair number have chosen to decline the contracts and all the rules and regulations that go with them. But while these physicians are freed from the restrictions that come with contract status, their freedom has its own price.

One problem non-participating physicians face is getting direct reimbursement and explanation of benefits from insurance companies. Even if the patients request insurers to send payment and copies of EOBs directly to physicians, insurance companies are not legally bound to comply.

A greater pain arises when insurance carriers send letters to patients claiming that the

physician is over-billing and charging higher than the "usual and customary" fee for services rendered. Unfortunately, there are no standards for determining usual and customary fees, and numerous sources provide such information. Patients have no way of knowing this, however, and become angry with physicians without realizing that the "usual and customary" fees are artificially low.

We are interested in keeping track of these problems and working on the best way to resolve them. We have also been communicating with Carol Walker, a physician advocate at Merit Medical Services in Palatine. Ms. Walker has on-going communication with Illinois Senator Peter Fitzgerald, as well as with other politicians in Washington. Lawmakers have said that if she could document these problems, they would be willing to explore different means of correcting them.

Let us hear from you. Send us a one-page document describing your experience to P.J. Burns at CMS, 515 N. Dearborn St., Chicago, IL 60610; phone (312) 670-2550, ext. 368; e-mail pjburns@cmsdocs.org

LEGAL TOPICS

Lutheran General reaches settlement over resident issue

LUTHERAN GENERAL HOSPITAL HAS reached a settlement in a suit brought by the AMA's Physicians for Responsible Negotiation (PRN) on behalf of the hospital's residents. The suit charged the hospital had engaged in unfair labor practices. Lutheran General has now agreed to post notices informing residents of their rights to form a union without fear of retaliation. Last December nearly 170 residents voted on whether to form a union, but the ballots have been impounded pending an appeal. The dispute revolves around whether 40 "rotating residents" should have been allowed to vote. The NLRB denied the hospital permission to include rotating residents in the vote.

In other news, a group of Austin, Tex., emergency medicine physicians chose PRN to be their labor organization affiliate. The decision will help the physicians negotiate outstanding patient care issues including en-

suring adequate staffing of board-certified physicians in the emergency room.

House approves expansion of health coverage for mental illnesses

LEGISLATION PROVIDING LIMITED INSURANCE coverage for mental illness passed the Illinois House of Representatives May 2. The Illinois Psychiatric Society supported this action but cautioned that SB 1341 is merely a first step.

"While we acknowledge this important first step toward a solution, we will not forfeit future efforts to strengthen the bill so that patients may receive the fair and balanced treatment they deserve," said IPS President and Chicago Medical Society trustee Shastri Swaminathan, MD.

The bill, which includes only group policyholders of accident and health insurance, limits coverage to employers with 50 or more employees, nine specific biological diseases, 45 days of inpatient care and 60 outpatient visits per year. It becomes inoperative after Dec. 31, 2005.

June vascular program crosses specialty boundaries

SANDEEP KHOSLA, MD, CHIEF OF CARDIOLOGY at Mount Sinai Hospital Medical Center, will co-conduct a two-and-a-half-day CME program, "GIVE 2001, Gaining International Vascular Expertise," June 25-27, at the Drake Hotel. The program, presented by Mount Sinai and the Society for Cardiac Angiography and Interventions, will feature live case demonstrations presented via satellite link from Sinai's catheterization angiography lab. "By combining the diagnostic and corrective steps, patients get more immediate care at lower cost, with better utilization of resources," Dr. Khosla says.

The program, which crosses traditional boundaries between specialties, is co-directed by Gerald Dorros, MD, medical director of the Dorros-Feuer Interventional Foundation in Phoenix. The program's faculty includes Mount Sinai's David Ansell, MD, chairman, internal medicine, and Aziz Ahmed, MD, director, coronary care unit. For further information on the program, please contact Medical Media Communications at (800) 600-2525, or (312) 337-0817.

Mark your calendar AMA Organized Medical Staff Section hosts open house

This June is the last chance for *all* physicians—regardless of practice affiliation or membership status—to attend the Annual Assembly Meeting of the AMA Organized Medical Staff Section. The event will be held June 14-18, at the Chicago Marriott Downtown.

This annual open house is an opportunity to learn about the value of organized medicine and its power to raise issues and propose solutions at the national level.

See ad on page 11 for details.

(The 150th Annual Meeting of the AMA House of Delegates will be held Sunday, June 17, through Thursday, June 21, at the Chicago Hilton & Towers, 720 S. Michigan Ave.)

Congress: Tell us your Medicare woes

LAWMAKERS IN CONGRESS ARE SURVEYING physicians about the regulatory and paperwork burdens imposed by Medicare, government audits of physicians' claims, and the complexity of Medicare rules.

After analyzing the responses, lawmakers will likely use the results to develop legislation to help simplify Medicare's regulatory and paperwork burdens.

Go to www.house.gov/commerce/hcfasurvey.htm, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce Website to share your experiences.

"FamilyCare" bill to target parents

THE ILLINOIS HOUSE UNANIMOUSLY PASSED the "FamilyCare" bill (HB-23), which would expand the KidCare insurance program to cover 200,000 working parents. In some states federal matching dollars for KidCare can now be extended to cover parents, but Illinois has not approved such a measure. The state reportedly returned \$67 million in unspent KidCare funds last year.

CMS-SPONSORED PROGRAMS

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OSHA Training (1.0 CME Credit Hour, Category 1)

Schedule for the remainder of the year:

- Wednesday, Sept. 12, at 3 p.m. (AMA Bldg.)
- Wednesday, Oct. 10, at 10 a.m. (AMA Bldg.)
- Wednesday, Nov. 7, at 3 p.m. (AMA Bldg.)

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\$25 members and staff

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