



Physician Advocate

The Harris County Medical Society serves as an advocate for physicians in Harris County. *Physician Advocate* is produced quarterly to provide recent highlights of HCMS advocacy on behalf of members and their patients.

Texas Medical Association's (TMA) Proposition 12 anniversary survey shows more doctors are offering more services.

On Sept. 7, TMA and HCMS distributed to Texas news media a news release on TMA's survey results on medical liability. The survey found since Proposition 12:

- * Texas physicians are finding it much easier for them to recruit new physicians to their communities, even among high-risk specialties.
- * Texas physicians are much more likely to accept high-risk patients and offer new services or procedures.
- * Professional liability premiums have dropped by more than 20 percent.

Medicare Presentations and Grassroots Campaign on the Need for Action—HCMS gave a presentation on the impact of the 2007 Medicare fee schedule to Park Plaza Hospital on Sept. 13. HCMS staff also attended numerous specialty and branch meetings to inform physicians about the Medicare situation and ask them to contact their legislators. To assist physicians, HCMS has provided physicians and their patients with letters on its Web site, www.hcms.org, that can be downloaded, signed and sent to Congress to urge them to stop the cuts. Also, on the Web site is information on how to locate your legislator.

TMA and AMA Visit Congress to Discuss Medicare—Former TMA President Dr. Bohn Allen, TMA Chief Lobbyist Darren Whitehurst, and other TMA and AMA physician leaders and staff went to Washington, D.C., to urge Congress to stop the cuts to physician fees for Medicare. AMA, TMA, HCMS, and other medical societies across the nation have presented a united front while working toward the long-term goal: to repeal the ill-conceived formula, known as the sustainable growth rate that generates cuts in Medicare physician payments year after year, and to enact a solution that reflects increases in practice costs. HCMS and TMA coordinated a media campaign to coincide with the visits in Washington, D.C.

Meeting with Elected Officials to Discuss Medicine's Issues

—HCMS staff and **Dr. JoAnne L. Rogers** met with State Rep. Sylvester Turner to brief him on issues ranging from Medicaid/CHIP, support for GME funding and scope of practice issues. Rep. Turner is the senior member of the Texas House and an influential member of the House Appropriations Committee.

HCMS Testifies for Non-Smoking Ordinance

—As a result of physicians' actions, the Houston City Council voted to ban smoking in bars and restaurants. HCMS President **Dr. Diana L. Fite** testified before the Houston City Council Health Committee and research details on the dangers of secondhand smoke were presented by physicians from The University of Texas, Baylor College of Medicine and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Collaborating with Large Clinics on Socioeconomic and Legislative Issues

—HCMS staff met with Fondren Orthopedic Group to discuss ways HCMS could work with large clinics and specialty hospitals on managed care contracts and payments, Medicare and Medicaid volume, and general aspects of the group practices and specialty hospitals.

Business of Medicine Presentations Provide Practice Management Information

—HCMS gave presentations on quality measurements, contracting with managed care and reimbursements to Houston ENT, Galveston County Medical Society, HCMS Southeast Branch, UT Family Medicine residents, and Gulf Coast Medical Group Management Association.

Managed Care Survey on Administrative Practices

—**Dr. Kimberly E. Monday**, chair of the HCMS Managed Care Committee, and HCMS staff met with **Dr. Chuck Begley**, faculty and a doctorate student at UT School of Public Health (UTSPH), to discuss a survey of managed care plan administrative practices. UTSPH will provide an outline of its survey plans to the committee.

Medical Staff Help—Dr. Madhuretta Achari

and HCMS staff held a conference call with TMA legal counsel Rocky Wilcox and AMA legal staff to discuss hospital practices of creating contracts with physicians that bypass the medical staff bylaws. AMA legal staff has agreed to provide assistance to the medical staff in dealing with the hospitals' contracting practices.

Working on the Issues of the Uninsured and Lack of Small Business Health Insurance Products

—HCMS staff attends the Health Care Emerging Issues Committee of the Greater Houston Partnership.

Working with TDI on Claims Processing

—HCMS staff attended the Texas Department of Insurance Technical Advisory Committee on Claims Processing meeting on Aug. 23. The Committee reviewed the final draft report that was sent to TDI Commissioner Mike Geeslin to take to Texas Legislators, as mandated by state law.

Contracting and Quality Issues Discussed

—HCMS President **Dr. Diana L. Fite** attended the Medical Directors Committee meeting on July 11 to discuss contracting and quality issues.

Meeting with TMB Board Member

—HCMS staff met with **Dr. Margaret C. McNeese**, a new board member of the Texas Medical Board, to discuss our member physicians' concerns.

Mini-Internship Program Provides Community Leaders with a Firsthand Look at Issues Facing Medicine

—On July 26, the following participated in the HCMS Mini-Internship Program: Eric Berger, *Houston Chronicle* reporter and blog writer; Tan Kaleemullah, manager of Gateway to Care's Provider Health Network; Rebecca Suarez, reporter with Channel 47 Telemundo TV; and Jo Ann Zuniga, assistant editor with the *Texas Medical Center News*. The interns spent the day with two different physicians, experiencing the clinical as well as administrative side

of medicine. The day was followed by a debriefing dinner to discuss the major issues facing medicine. The following physicians participated: Mini-Internship Chair **Dr. John R. Potts**, HCMS President Elect **Dr. Michael V. Kelly II** and **Drs. Madhuretta Achari, Alan P. Glombicki, Keith A. Bourgeois, Thomas S. Granchi, Philip A. Matorin, William S. Gilmer, A. Tomas Garcia III, Alberto O. Barroso, Janice L. Zimmerman, and Nora A. Janjan.**

Reimbursement Consultations Held by HCMS and TMA—HCMS hosted free and private 30-minute reimbursement consultations for physicians and their staffs on Oct. 18-20. The consultations helped physicians find solutions to primary/secondary coverage issues, collection problems, late-filing appeals, Medicaid, Medicare, coding, credentialing, and much more.

Blood Group Working to Stabilize Blood Supply—The HCMS Blood Collecting Group, led by **Dr. Richard J. Hausner** and **Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall** and consisting of representatives of the five area blood collecting groups, met on Sept. 18 to discuss the recent surge in blood usage and to how to stabilize the blood supply. The Committee has made great strides in stabilizing the blood supply over the past four years.

HCMS Partners with HBA to Inform Schoolchildren about the Dangers of Alcohol and Drugs—On Oct. 19, through the IDEA Program, HCMS physicians partnered with Houston Bar Association attorneys to provide schoolchildren with the medical and legal consequences of using drugs and alcohol. The following physicians participated: IDEA Chair **Drs. Mary W. Geda, Kelli Cohen, Marco Renazco, Edwin C. Wood, Armando Jarquin, Ebony Williams, Kulvinder S. Bajwa, Robbie Fradkin, Fatima A. Mawji, George Leventon, Penelope J. Hooks, Sandra Vale, Susan E. Backes, and Phi-Nga Jeannie Le.**

Doctors Volunteer for D-Tag Tattoo Removal Program to Help Youth Enter Workforce—Through the D-Tag Program, a partnership between the city of Houston and HCMS, physicians assist former gang members in entering the workforce by removing their gang-affiliated tattoos. Physicians volunteer their time on one Saturday a month to remove tattoos of participants in the City of

Houston's Operation Gang Together. The program has doubled to more than 50 participants per month. The following physicians have participated this year: **Dr. Michael V. Kelly II**, chair of the HCMS D-Tag Program, **Dr. Christopher Livingston, Dr. Jeanne A. Polsen, Dr. Joseph M. Perlman, Dr. Melissa Bogle, Dr. James F. Boynton, Dr. D. Robert Wiemer, Dr. Tri H. Nguyen, and Dr. Erik Marques.**

The Health Museum Expands—The Health Museum (aka the John P. McGovern Museum of Health & Medical Science) has begun construction on a new 6,000 square foot Sue Trammell Whitfield Traveling Exhibit Gallery. The Fondren Foundation provided funding to honor the Museum's immediate past president. The gallery will be completed by January for the opening of the "Brain" exhibit, which initially opened at the Smithsonian.

HCMS Fall Business Expo Provides Physicians with Services, Products and CMEs—The Expo took place on Oct. 28 at the Reliant Center. It offered three ethics CME seminars on patient communication, quality and employee theft. It also provided information on products and services as well as information on new legislation that will affect physicians' practices.

New Member & Young Physician Meeting—On Aug. 3, HCMS hosted its 2nd annual New Member/Young Physician meeting to help new and young members become more familiar with HCMS. An ethics CME program on "Pay for Performance" was offered by AMA Board of Trustee member and former TMA President **Dr. James Rohack.**

HCMS met with Texan Plus Medicare Advantage Plan—HCMS staff met with the group to discuss Medicare managed care issues.

RPO Honors Doctors—The Retired Physician Organization (RPO) honored **Dr. Edwin J. Morrow** with its Retired Physician of the Year Award and **Dr. John R. Kelsey Jr.** with its Cody Award for Contributions to Literature and the Arts at its luncheon Sept. 12.

Medical Student Mixer—On Aug. 24, HCMS hosted the HCMS First-Year Medical Student Mixer for more than 140 medical students from the University of Texas Medical School at Houston and Baylor College of Medicine.

HCMS President **Dr. Diana L. Fite** and HCMS President Elect **Dr. Michael V. Kelly II**, along with other physician leaders from HCMS, international medical societies, special interest medical associations, and members of HCMS Alliance welcomed the students.

The six branch societies of HCMS held meetings on the latest practice management information for physicians. Most of the meetings provided ethics CME credit. The topics included "Technology & Patient Communication," "Business of Medicine III," "Legal Cases & Cautionary Tales for Medical Staff Physicians," "Get More Patients & Keep Them: Marketing Your Medical Practice," and "Physician Stress & Burn Out."

HCMS Maintained Relationships with Media—HCMS President **Dr. Diana L. Fite** and HAM President **Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall** and HCMS President Elect **Dr. Michael V. Kelly II** presented awards to journalists for outstanding medical and health reporting at the Francis. C. Moore, MD, Medical Journalism Awards Luncheon on May 19. Representatives from the city of Houston and Harris County Health Departments spoke on the Houston/Harris County Childhood Immunization Initiative, which is a collaborative effort among many organizations in the Greater Houston area to increase children's immunization rates. **Dr. Herminia Palacio**, executive director of Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services, was one of the speakers.

Media Coverage Provides Public with Positive View of Medical Issues and Physicians—Positive media included stories on medical liability reform, retail health clinics, IDEA Program, profiles on **Drs. Diana L. Fite** and **Shelley Sekula-Gibbs**, physicians offering extended office hours, sudden death of teens, emergency health center at Willowbrook, business tax, Medicare, uninsured, HCMS Mini-Internship Program, electronic medical records, smoking in Houston, scope of practice, insurance practices, and Gateway to Care. Stories were published in the following: *Houston Business Journal, Dallas Business Journal, Houston Chronicle, American Medical News, Texas Medical Center News, West University Journal, Health & Fitness Magazine, Houston Chronicle's Sci Guy Blog*, and on all the local television stations.