



PhysicianAdvocate

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 member physicians and their patients.

Legislative Staff Briefing – On Feb. 18, HCMS Chair of the Board of Legislation **Dr. Kimberly E. Monday** and HCMS staff met with key staff members of the House and Senate in Austin to discuss bills that are crucial to physicians. The day-long session of meetings was targeted at staffers who are now working on new committees and who are not familiar with physicians' issues.

Greater Houston Partnership Issues – On Feb. 25, HCMS staff participated in a panel of health care lobbyists, which included Jared Wolfe of the Texas Association of Health Plans and King Hillier of the Texas Hospital Association. The group discussed the physicians' 2009 legislative agenda for the Greater Houston Partnership's Emerging Health Care Issues Committee.

HCMS Health Insurance Experience – TMA is featuring HCMS' health insurance experience in its media releases and information to elected officials. HCMS has requested information on its actual medical costs from Blue Cross for the last four years. Reporter Rick Casey with the *Houston Chronicle* wrote about our experience of receiving large increases despite medical loss ratios of approximately 50 percent in December 2007. Since then, HCMS has received price reductions for the last two years.

Greater Houston Partnership Conference – **HCMS President Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall** attended a Greater Houston Partnership (GHP) / Federal Reserve Bank Conference: "Dollars and Sense: Texas, Taxes and Uninsured Children" on March 6. On March 8, the *Chronicle* published an editorial from the GHP chair and president supporting increased funding for Medicaid and CHIP.

ML Board Meets in Austin – To increase the effectiveness of *First Tuesdays at the Capitol* visits, the HCMS Board of Medical Legislation met in Austin after the Capitol visits were complete on March 3. Seven of the 12 members were able to make the trip.

Second First Tuesday on March 3 – On March 3, HCMS staff members accompanied

30 physicians and Alliance members to Austin for the March *First Tuesdays at the Capitol*. Approximately 250 physicians from around the state made visits to legislators. The HCMS group visited with elected officials and staff from all of the Harris County legislative offices and discussed insurance reform, scope of practice, the budget, and tort reform. HCMS had the second highest level of participation behind Travis County (Austin).

First Tuesdays on April 7 – HCMS earned Harris County the "Greatest Participation" award at the April 7 *First Tuesdays at the Capitol*, where physicians discuss issues with their local legislators in Austin.

DeBakey-Cooley Event – The Houston Forum inaugurated the Biennial DeBakey Cooley Heart to Heart Humanitarian Award on Feb. 25. **Dr. Michael E. DeBakey and Dr. Denton A. Cooley** were the first recipients of this award, which will be given biennially to an outstanding individual whose humanism has touched and enriched the lives of others. Representing HCMS at the event were: **Drs. Steven D. Brown, L. Maximilian Buja, Kelli A. Cohen, Tom Garcia, Shelly E. Liss, Bradford S. Patt, Guru Reddy, and Judi Shaw-Rice.**

CIGNA Key Stakeholders Forum – On Feb. 19, **Drs. William S. Gilmer and Guru Reddy** and HCMS staff attended the forum. The guest speaker was Mark McClellan, MD, PHD, director of the Engelberg Center for Health Care Reform.

TMB Survey Results – The results are in from the *HCMS 2009 Texas Medical Board (TMB) Survey*. This is the third time HCMS has distributed such a survey on TMB. The responses showed that physicians have continued concerns about the short response time allowed after receiving the initial letter, lack of details about the complaint, anonymous complaints, and the overall feeling that a physician is guilty until proven innocent. HCMS has sent the survey results to the TMA's lobby staff for legislative efforts.

Ike Recovery Health Care Issues – On March 5, HCMS hosted a meeting of regional stakeholders to develop principles for the recovery of the health care system after Hurricane Ike. This information was sent to our local elected state officials, local media, and TMA. The Texas Legislator has placed money in the Texas budget for recovery

Insurance Committee Testimony – At TMA's request, **Executive Vice President of HCMS Greg Bernica** presented HCMS' experience with purchasing health insurance to the House Insurance Committee on March 24. The testimony was in support of HB 531, which would mandate minimum levels of medical loss ratios for health insurance plans.

Medical Student Business of Medicine Series – HCMS brought its Business of Medicine presentations to both UT Houston and Baylor College of Medicine first- and second-year medical students this year. There were a total of nine presentations. **Dr. Arlo F. Weltge, Dr. Shkelzen Hoxhaj and Dr. Angela Siler-Fisher** were instrumental in getting student credit, which helped to increase student participation.

Med Student Presentation on Leadership #7 **Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall, Dr. Shkelzen Hoxhaj** and third-year UT Houston medical student **Spencer A. Pruitt** gave a leadership presentation on March 23. HCMS staff also participated and encouraged students to attend the April 7th *First Tuesdays at the Capitol*, which focused on medical education issues.

Med Student Presentation #8 – **Dr. Karen A. Delhey** gave a presentation on group practice without walls on March 25.

Med Student Presentation #9 on Practice Models – HCMS members **Drs. Arlo F. Weltge, William S. Gilmer, and Patrick M. Carter** participated in a panel discussion on the pros and cons of various practice models to the UT Houston and Baylor medical students on March 30.

UT Fourth-Year Medical Student

Presentation – HCMS staff gave a Business of Medicine presentation to the UT fourth-year medical students to assist them in transitioning into residency programs. The focus of the presentation was on coding and documentation. Dr. Debra Patterson, medical director of TrailBlazer Health and Texas Medicare administrative contractor, and Koressa Gregory of the UT Compliance Department, also were presenters.

TexMed 2009 – HCMS was very successful at TexMed. **Former HCMS President Dr. William H. Fleming III**, was installed as President, **HCMS President Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall** was elected to the Board of Trustees, **former HCMS President Dr. Michael E. Speer** was elected as Board chair, and **former HCMS President Dr. Tom Garcia** was elected to the Executive Committee. **Spencer A. Pruitt**, a medical student at UT Houston, was elected by the student section to serve as their representative on the TMA Board. All but one of our resolutions were adopted. The other one was referred for action.

C. Frank Webber, MD, Award – **Dr. Arlo F. Weltge** received the Texas Medical Association's Medical Student Section Frank Webber, MD, Award during TexMed. Created in 1987, the award is given annually by TMA-MSS to honor a Texas physician for his or her outstanding service to the section and its members. The award is given in recognition of Dr. Webber's leadership and dedication to medical students. His efforts prompted the development of the strong student organization within TMA.

Spring 2009 Business Expo – The HCMS Spring Business Expo was held on April 18 at Reliant Center. Despite very bad weather, approximately 220 people attended the Expo. Physicians were able to attend three free CME seminars (two for ethics CME), network and talk with vendors about the latest services and products for physicians and their practices.

Indian Docs Gala – **TMA President Dr. Josie Williams and Dr. Lewis E. and Mrs. Foxhall** attended the Indian Doctors Association Gala on April 18. **Dr. Foxhall** thanked the doctors for their active participation in the Medical Society and for their health care volunteer efforts. **Dr. Williams** spoke about the change in leadership at the Texas Medical Board (TMB) and the desire to maintain open lines of communication between the TMB and physicians.

Groups Met to Discuss Disaster Preparedness – HCMS held its third annual disaster preparedness meeting with the HCMS Council of Hospital Chiefs of Staff, Council of Specialty Societies, HCMS EMS Committee, and the Houston Emergency Medicine Society

on April 21. **Drs. Steven D. Brown, Herminia Palacio, George D. Santos, David E. Persse, Kelli A. Cohen** and CMOC representative Doug Havron participated in a panel discussion that outlined how each entity plans for and reacts during a natural disaster or public health emergency.

TMA Visited Houston Med Schools – **Dr. William S. Gilmer** and HCMS Executive Vice President Greg Bernica accompanied **TMA President Dr. Josie Williams** and TMA staff to meetings with **Dr. William T. Butler**, president of Baylor College of Medicine, and **Dr. Giuseppe N. Colasurdo**, dean of The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, and other senior leaders of the institutions. The schools were very pleased with TMA's position supporting medical student and resident funding. **Dr. Gilmer** educated them about the success of our payment advocacy program in collecting money for the medical schools. Both groups committed to assist in promoting HCMS and TMA membership.

Childhood Obesity Education Program – On April 14, **Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall** and HCMS staff met with representatives of The University of Texas School of Public Health to discuss their interest in the collection of data on childhood obesity and their plans to provide physicians with education tools regarding the treatment of obese children. The group agreed that working with the specialty societies to conduct a needs assessment would be the next step.

Greater Houston Partnership Presentation – On April 29, **Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall** made a presentation to the Greater Houston Partnership Emerging Issues Committee about the benefits of medical homes. The topic was very well received. There was substantial discussion about how a medical home pilot could be conducted in Houston.

HCMS Honors Journalists – **HAM President Elect Dr. JoAnne L. Rogers and HCMS President Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall** presented awards to local medical/health journalists for excellence in reporting at the annual HCMS/HAM Francis C. Moore, MD, Medical Journalism Awards ceremony on May 11 at Trevisio. As the featured speaker, **Dr. Foxhall** presented *Truth in Labeling, What's In Your Health Plan?* **Drs. Rogers and Foxhall** presented awards for medical health stories in the categories of Television, Radio, Daily Newspaper, Periodicals, Medical Economics-Print, and Medical Economics-Broadcast. Receiving awards were: Christi Myers and Mike Carl, KTRK-TV Channel 13; Dennis Spellman and Jason Youngblood, KAIH-TV Channel 39, Rosa

Flores, KHOU-TV Channel 11; Capella Tucker, KUHF-88.7 FM NPR Radio; Bill Stamps, KUHF-88.7 FM NPR Radio; Cindy George, *Houston Chronicle*; Ronda Wendler, *Texas Medical Center News*; Erin Mosley, *Houston Defender Newspaper*; Monica Perin, *Houston Business Journal*; Paul Knight, *Houston Press*; and Brian Sasser, Robert Arnold, John Barone, and Jon Hill, KPRC-TV Channel 2.

Media Coverage – On March 9, **Dr. Jose E. Rodriguez** was interviewed by 700 AM on back pain and insurance reform. The show aired at 8 p.m. On March 9, HCMS received a call from *Houston Press* on how organ donations are done and referred the reporter to LifeGift and to other donation banks. On March 19, *Houston Chronicle* printed story, *Houston-area ERs feel strain since Ike*, with quotes from **Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall**. On March 21, *Galveston County Daily News* published story including HCMS Ike Principles, entitled *Calls for trauma increase*. On March 24, HCMS scheduled interviews with **Dr. Foxhall** about Ike Principles and **Dr. George D. Santos** about psychiatry needs since Ike for the *Houston Business Journal*. On March 31, HCMS scheduled interview with **Dr. Carlton J. Perry**, president of the Houston Plastic Surgery Society, to talk with the *Houston Chronicle* on what is happening with elective procedures during this recession. HCMS scheduled Houston Urological Society President **Dr. Raja Nicholas Salameh** to discuss on May 1 with a *Houston Chronicle* reporter the level of vasectomies urologists are seeing since the economic downturn. HCMS scheduled an interview with a *Houston Chronicle* reporter and with Elaine Young, wife and office manager of **Dr. Donald C. Young's** practice, to discuss the affect of Blue Cross and Blue Shield's physician rating system on a physician. HCMS on April 6 assisted with article in *Houston Chronicle*, *Fewer people going under the knife: Economy causes cut in elective surgeries*. In May, HCMS gave *Houston Press* reporter information on ob/gyn on getting an appointment in Houston. HCMS distributed Francis C. Moore news releases and photo to all local media on May 11. On May 1, HCMS gave a *Houston Chronicle* reporter information on where physicians can get testing kits for the H1N1 flu. HCMS posted information on its Web site, www.hcms.org, on H1N1 on where to get testing kits and other information as it became available. Also, had links to CDC and TMA Web sites on the flu. April 2009, HCMS Physician Health Alert System distributed faxes and e-mails to the general membership on the H1N1.