



Physician Advocate

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

TMA's Medicare Meltdown Campaign — The U.S. House of Representatives acted on June 24 to reverse the 21.3 percent cut in Medicare payments to physicians. The House approved Senate-passed legislation that raises fees by 2.2 percent through Nov. 30. Because of the ongoing uncertainty with Medicare payments and no permanent fix to physicians' payments, the Texas Medical Association (TMA) and Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) are continuing to gather signatures on the *Stop the Medicare Meltdown* petition, available at www.hcms.org. The petition urges Congress to permanently fix the Medicare physician payment system. TMA has signed up all 50 state medical societies and more than 30 national and state specialty societies to participate in collecting signatures for the petition. The petition campaign currently has collected more than 110,000 signatures nationwide and has garnered a lot of media coverage throughout Texas.

Medicare Meltdown News Conference — Houston's Medicare Meltdown Campaign began with TMA Immediate Past President/Former HCMS President **Dr. William Fleming III** and HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** launching the campaign in front of media, physicians and patients. Similar news conferences were held throughout Texas on April 5. It was covered by KUHF 88.7 FM NPR, KPFT Radio, and KTRK TV Channel 13.

Medicare Meltdown Presentations — On June 8, HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** spoke at the Retired Physicians Organization (RPO) monthly luncheon and encouraged all RPO members to take their petitions beyond the physician community. On May 11, **Dr. Gilmer** made a presentation to the HCMS Alliance membership at its Installation of Officers ceremony. **Dr. Gilmer** presented a summary of health system reform to Baylor College of Medicine medical students on June 15. He also asked for their assistance with obtaining signatures on the *Medicare Meltdown* petition. The presentation has been brought to the HCMS Business Expo, branches, media, and other HCMS committee and council meetings.

Medicare Meltdown Web Section — HCMS created a special section for the Medicare Meltdown Campaign on the front page of the HCMS Web site, www.hcms.org. It features the petition, information on what HCMS and TMA are doing, information on how to talk to your patients about Medicare, sample letters, evaluation tools, your options, how to contact your congressman, etc.

Houston Mayor Meeting — HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** participated in a meeting between Texas Medical Center CEOs and Mayor Annise Parker on May 27, to educate the mayor about the health care industry's impact on Houston's economy.

Special EHR Section — HCMS created a special electronic health record (EHR) section on the front page of the HCMS Web site, www.hcms.org, to provide physicians

with information on meaningful use rules, Medicare/Medicaid incentive program, measures, and much more.

Health Reform School — In an effort to help Texas physicians adapt and thrive in the new health care environment, HCMS will be hosting several of TMA's *Health Reform School* seminars throughout Houston.

HCMS Branch Meetings — HCMS physicians were able to gain ethics CME credit, network and gain helpful practice management information throughout Houston at HCMS branch meetings in the spring. Programs included: *Flagging Identity Theft: Is the Patient Who He Says He Is?*; *Show Me the Money—How to Keep What the Government Doesn't Take*; *RAC, CMS, OIG, MAC, CPT, E&M: What Does All This Mean to Me?*; and *Electronic Medical Records: Adoption and Stimulus Package Incentives*.

HCMS Business Expo — More than 240 physicians and their staff attended the HCMS Business Expo at Reliant Center on April 17. The Expo provided three CME seminars on electronic medical records, patient satisfaction and the Medicare recovery audit contractor (RAC). Also, more than 60 exhibitors were on hand to share information about products and services to assist physicians and their practices.

AMA Annual Meeting — HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** and HCMS staff attended the American Medical Association (AMA) Annual meeting in Chicago. AMA board members defended their support for Health System Reform (HSR) by stating HSR was good for patients. They recognized that the law did not include much for physicians. President Elect **Dr. Peter Carmel** stated he was committed to obtaining changes in health system reform that will benefit physicians. The following HSR related resolutions were passed at AMA:

- Seek legislation that allows physicians and patients to freely contract under Medicare;
- Remove or oppose any component of HSR inconsistent with AMA policy;
- Repeal "non-discrimination in health care" (scope of practice expansion) section of HSR;
- Seek realistic target for meaningful use of electronic health records (EHR) to maximize physician participation;
- Streamline PQRI and delay mandatory implementation until it is streamlined;
- Develop guidelines for health care delivery payment systems that protect the patient-physician relationship, provide tools to physicians and change laws to facilitate physicians' participation; and
- Increase resident slots by seeking graduate medical education (GME) funding from all payers.

Family Day at the Museum — HCMS hosted its 3rd annual HCMS Member Day at the John P. McGovern Museum of Health & Medical Science (The Health

Museum) on Feb. 20. At this event, HCMS members and their families enjoyed free attendance into The Health Museum and physicians took a free ethics CME program sponsored by Texas Medical Liability Trust.

Museum Exhibit Opening of "Animation" — The John P. McGovern Museum of Health & Medical Science (The Health Museum) opened its newest exhibit *Animation*, featuring *Cartoon Network*, May 29 - Sept. 6. The exhibit allows visitors to step into the exciting world of animation with Cartoon Network characters and explore how art, math, science, and technology come together to create the entertaining world of cartoons. Visitors are able to experiment with storyboarding, character design, movement, timing, filming, sound, and more.

U.T. Graduation — HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** attended the UT commencement exercises on May 29 and delivered a brief welcome on behalf of the Medical Society. The commencement speaker was U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin.

Gulf Coast Regional Extension Center — HCMS staff met with **Kim Dunn, MD, PhD**, assistant professor at The University of Texas School of Health Information Sciences at Houston, and Pam Salyer, operations manager for the Gulf Coast Regional Extension Center (GCREC), on May 28. The GCREC has received \$15 million to assist primary care doctors with "meaningful use" of electronic medical records (EMR). The GCREC will evaluate EMR vendors and negotiate discounts with the top vendors.

HCMS Appreciation Day — HCMS provided 40 percent off the Kemah Board Walk on May 16 for HCMS Member Appreciation Day. HCMS has received similar discounts for certain Astros' games and the circus.

Speed Networking/Ethics CME for Young Physicians On March 24, HCMS Council of Young Physicians held a speed networking meeting with one hour of ethics CME, *Implementation of Health Care Changes*. The speed networking involved a series of mini-introductions to assist young physicians in meeting each other. The goal of the meeting was to assist young physicians in building their referral base and to learn of practice opportunities.

HCMS Helps Make TMA Policy — Nearly 100 HCMS physicians attended the 2010 TMA House of Delegates meeting in Fort Worth April 30-May 1. During the meeting, the delegates hammered out new policy measures. HCMS provided many resolutions. To review them, go to www.hcms.org.

Boy Scout Physicals — Physicians volunteered their time June 5, to provide physicals to approximately 200 boy scouts who participate in the Urban Scouting Division of the Boy Scouts of America. The Urban Scouting Division, established in 1987, encourages at-risk boys to become involved in scouting, providing them with leader-

ship skills and challenges in nature. For the 18th year, HCMS and HAM have coordinated free physicals for inner-city Boy Scouts. The physicals enable the boys, many of whom could not afford it otherwise, to attend Boy Scout Camp. HAM President **Dr. JoAnne L. Rogers** took leadership over the physician volunteers. HCMS thanks all who volunteered their time and expertise: **Drs. Wael Aboughali, James Butler, William Chen, Ann Craig, Kyle Dickson, David Edelstein, Ray Fitzgerald, Laura Grubb, Craig Johnson, John Lu, Falanda Limar, JoAnne Rogers, Tad Shirley, and Elizabeth Yang.**

TMA Board of Trustees — Former HCMS President **Dr. Tom Garcia** was re-elected to the TMA Board of Trustees at TexMed 2010.

Disaster Preparedness — On April 13, HCMS held its annual Disaster Planning meeting with HCMS Council of Hospital Chiefs of Staff, chaired by **Dr. Jonas Garcia**; HCMS Council of Specialty Societies, chaired by **Dr. Swapan Dubey**; and HCMS Emergency Care Committee, chaired by **Dr. Shkelzen Hoxhaj**. Panelists at the meeting were: **Drs. David Pesse** and **Ira Nemeth**, along with Doug Havron and Lori Upton, R.N. The panelists gave an update on drills they have used and how they continue to plan for various disasters, including information on new resources. They also discussed how they have applied lessons learned from the past hurricanes and storms.

Disaster Preparedness Materials — HCMS Communications Department continues to update the disaster preparedness brochure to help physicians and their practices prepare for a disaster. The downloadable brochure is available on the HCMS Web site, www.hcms.org.

Houston Indian Doctors Association — HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** presented information on HCMS activities, achievements and Medicare Meltdown information at the Houston Indian Doctors Association Gala.

Chinese American Doctors Association of Houston — March 5, HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** and HAM President **Dr. JoAnne Rogers** presented information to the Chinese Doctors Association of America Gala on HCMS activities, achievements and Medicare Meltdown.

Arab AMA Association — HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** attended the gala, in which **Dr. Hagop Kantarjian** of The U.T. MD Anderson Cancer Center and Dr. Francois Abboud of the University of Iowa received the prestigious award of excellence.

Reimbursement Consults — On May 10-13, HCMS hosted reimbursement consultations with TMA experts at five locations throughout Houston. The free and private 30-minute consultations help physicians and their staff in learning how to get paid faster. The consultations are provided as a member benefit twice a year.

HCMS/HAM Medical Journalism Awards — HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** and HAM President **Dr. JoAnne Rogers** presented awards to broadcast and print journalists for excellence in medical/health and medical economics reporting at the May 13 Francis C. Moore Luncheon at Treviso. Dr. Gilmer gave a presentation, *Building a New Health Law on A Crumbling Foundation*, which included detailed information on the Sustained

Growth Rate (SGR), Medicare and the Medicare Meltdown Campaign and Health System Reform to KUHF 88.7 FM NPR, KPRC TV Channel 2, KRIV Fox 26 TV, KTRK TV Channel 13, KUHT PBS TV Channel 8, KIAH TV Channel 39, *Houston Chronicle*, *Bay Area Citizen*, and *Texas Medical Center News*. KRIV and KPRC TV filmed the awards program for the evening news.

TMA Anson Jones Awards — May 21, HCMS and TMA staff along with HCMS Former President **Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall** presented TMA's Anson Jones Awards to KUHT-TV PBS and KUHF radio NPR.

Media Coverage on Medicare — KHOU TV CBS in Houston and KVUE TV in Austin, aired the interview, "Medicare Cuts Weigh Heavily on Texas Doctors," with HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** and his patient on Medicare Meltdown on June 10. KRIV TV Channel 39 aired another interview with **Dr. William Gilmer** and a patient, "Congress Keeps Doctors in Limbo Over Medicare Cut" on June 9. May 18, HCMS provided information to *Houston Chronicle* for article, "More doctors drop Medicare patients," which received national media coverage from *CBS National News*, *USA Today* and *DrudgeReport.com*, *El Paso Times*, *Abilene Reporter-News*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, *San Antonio Express-News*, *Houston Business Journal*, *The Beaumont Enterprise*, *Rio Grande Guardian*, *Ohio Free Press*, *AARP Bulletin Today*, *Washington Examiner*, *ePharmacist*, *Amarillo Globe News*, *Athens Daily News*, *The Baytown Sun*, *The Bryan College Station Eagle*, *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, *Commerce Journal*, *Corsicana Daily Sun*, *Denton Record-Chronicle*, *El Paso Times*, *Greenville Herald-Banner*, *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, *Lufkin Daily News*, *Odessa American*, *Valley Morning Star (Harlingen)*, *KAUZ-TV Wichita Falls*, *KCBD-TV Lubbock*, *KENS-TV San Antonio*, *KETK-TV Tyler-Lufkin-Longview-Nacodoches*, *KFDA-TV Amarillo*, *KFDM-TV Beaumont Port Arthur*, *KGBT-TV Harlingen*, *KHOU TV Houston*, *KLTV-TV Tyler-Lufkin-Longview-Nacodoches*, *KPRC TV Houston*, *KRHD TV Waco-Bryan-Temple*, *KRIV-TV Houston*, *KTVT TV Dallas-Fort Worth*, *KTXA TV Dallas-Fort Worth*, *KVII-TV Amarillo*, *KVUE TV Austin*, *KWET TV Midland*, *KWTX-TV Dallas-Fort Worth*, *KVII TV Amarillo*, *KVUE TV Austin*, *KWES TV Midland*, *KWTX TV Waco-Bryan-Temple*, *KXXV-TV Waco-Bryan-Temple*, *WOAI-TV San Antonio*, *KTSA-AM Radio San Antonio*, and *El Paso Inc.* July 12, HCMS scheduled former HCMS President **Dr. Lewis Foxhall** was interviewed by KTRH radio for a morning segment on July 13 on why physicians are dropping out of Medicare and Medicaid. June 24, HCMS scheduled interview with **Dr. William Gilmer** and *Houston Chronicle* to discuss the latest information on the Medicare SGR situation. May 24, HCMS provided RAC information and more information on Medicare Meltdown to *Houston Chronicle* for future stories. May 5 HCMS provided more information on Medicare Meltdown to *Houston Business Journal*. On April 17 HCMS distributed Medicare Meltdown information at the HCMS Business Expo. April 20 HCMS Former President **Dr. Michael Speer** was interviewed for KTRK TV story on physicians charging new fees because of Medicare's low reimbursements. On April 6, HCMS sent photographs of the HCMS/TMA news conference to *Texas Medicine*, TMA's magazine, and to TMA's facebook for publication. On April 1, media advisories on Medicare Meltdown were distributed to all local television, newspaper and radio media in the Houston

area. March 29 HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** was interviewed by *Houston Business Journal* on Health System Reform and Medicare Meltdown. On March 22, Chair of HCMS Community Health Improvement & Communications Committee **Dr. Ken Hollis** and HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** did an interview on Medicare Meltdown with CNN 650 AM Radio, which ran on March 28. On March 8, **Dr. Mina Sinacori** did an interview on Medicare Meltdown with a patient, which aired on Fox TV Channel 26. On March 2, HCMS distributed information on Medicare meltdown to Fox 26 TV for a possible story. On March 1-5, HCMS heavily pitched stories on Medicare information to local media on fixing the SGR. On Feb. 9, HCMS sent Medicare and Medicaid information to Univision TV Channel 45 for a story on the city possibly raising the ambulance fees in Houston. On March 2, HCMS distributed information on Medicare Meltdown Campaign to Fox 26 TV. March 1-5, HCMS pitched stories on Medicare Meltdown Campaign to all local media.

Health System Reform — In July, HCMS scheduled HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** to participate in the post-lunch panel discussion for the West Chamber of Commerce Health and Wellness Committee on Sept. 17. The chamber will have representatives for physicians, hospitals, Medicare and the insurance companies to discuss the implications of health care reform on business in July. HCMS scheduled HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** to be interviewed by HTV on health system reform. May 24, HCMS CHIC member **Dr. Jose Rodriguez** was interviewed by 700 AM on the Medicare Meltdown and Health System Reform. On May 4, HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** presented information to Park Plaza Hospital on Health System Reform. On April 2, HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** was quoted in story, "Reform bill continues to draw challenges, mixed reviews," by the *Houston Business Journal*. On March 23, TMA Board of Trustee member **Dr. Lewis Foxhall**, HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** and Houston Academy of Medicine President **Dr. JoAnne Rogers** gave interviews on health system reform to KTRK TV Channel 13, which ran at 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. On Feb. 10, HCMS distributed a media advisory on Harris County Academy of Family Physicians hosting a meeting with leaders in health care on what health system reform will mean to family physicians.

Other Media Coverage — April 27, KHOU TV Channel 11 interviewed HCMS Former President and TMA Board of Trustees member **Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall** on scope of practice, particularly in regards to nurses. Chair of HCMS Board of Medical Legislation **Dr. Andrew P. Kant** was interviewed on April 12 by KHOU TV Channel 11 for a story on preserving tort reform. On July 22, HCMS President **Dr. William Gilmer** was interviewed by KPRC TV Channel 2 on how to find out information on your physician, due to recent stories about "pill mill" physicians. On Feb. 11, *Baylor College of Medicine Physician* published a story on **Dr. Raymond Kaufman** receiving the John P. McGovern Compleat Physician Award from HCMS/HAM. On Feb. 9, HCMS sent information to Univision TV Channel 45 for a story on the City of Houston possibly raising the ambulance fees. In May, HCMS presented more information to the *Houston Chronicle* on disaster preparedness for its health blog.