



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.

Legislative Success – The Texas Medical Association (TMA) and Harris County Medical Society worked hard to ensure good bills were passed and bad bills would die during the 2007 Legislative session. Go to <http://www.texmed.org/Template.aspx?id=5839> for a recap of the 2007 legislative session.

Good Bills—Good bills that passed were on: Medicaid payments, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), mandatory, structured physical education in public schools, health information technology, smart card technology, health plan cost transparency, health plan report card system, \$3 billion worth of cancer research bonds, graduate medical education (GME) funding, Texas Medical Board, and deductions in the business tax.

Bad Bills—Bad bills that TMA and county medical societies helped to defeat included: There will be no mandatory "treat until transfer" for futile care patients; The trial lawyers failed to dilute the historic 2003 medical liability reforms; There will be no expansion of scope of practice in the allied health professions; and The bill that would have reduced physician oversight and eliminated the requirement for on-site physician presence at retail health clinics was defeated.

Legislative Meetings—HCMS arranged more than 150 meetings for physicians with state legislators and their staffs.

Legislative Briefings—HCMS provided legislative briefings for the branch and specialty societies throughout the legislative session.

TMA Created an NPI Look-up Tool—TMA created, in cooperative effort with county medical societies, a database where physicians and their designated staff can find or download the National Provider Identifier (NPI) numbers of TMA referring physicians. Physicians will need these numbers for electronic billing to Medicare, Medicaid and commercial insurance plans. The database is in TMA's "Members' Only" section of its Web site, www.texmed.org. At the request of many members, TMA developed a system for physicians to delegate access to the look-up tool for up to three office staff members.

NPI Presentation—On April 17, Teresa Devine, TMA director of payment advocacy, gave a pres-

entation on the National Provider Identifier (NPI) implementation. The presentation was a collaboration of HCMS and Houston Community College System. There were more than 100 attendees.

Joint Meeting on Disaster Preparedness—More than 60 physicians attended the May 23 combined meeting of the HCMS Council of Hospital Chiefs of Staff, HCMS Council of Specialty Societies and the HCMS Emergency Medical Services Committee. The meeting featured a panel discussion on disaster/pandemic plans. Panel participants were: **Dr. David Persse**, city of Houston; **Dr. Herminia Palacio**, Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services, and **Dr. Jeff Kalina**, Texas Medical Center.

2007 Francis C. Moore Awards—HAM President **Dr. William S. Gilmer** presided over the Francis C. Moore, MD, Medical Journalism Awards luncheon at Trevisio on May 24. The Francis C. Moore, MD, Medical Journalism Awards was created so HCMS could recognize the important role journalists play in providing timely and significant medical and health information to the public. **Dr. Lewis Foxhall**, chair of the Harris County Healthcare Alliance, gave a presentation on the uninsured to the audience of physicians, journalists and award judges at the luncheon. Awards were judged on the basis of significance, quality and accuracy. Awards were presented to radio, television, daily newspaper and periodical journalists in the areas of health/medical stories, health/medical series and medical economics.

Boy Scout Physicals—More than 107 scouts received free physicals from Harris County Medical Society physicians on June 2. For 15 years, HCMS physicians have volunteered to give scouts from the Urban Scouting Division of the Boy Scouts of America free physicals, enabling them to attend summer camp. Special thanks to the following HCMS physicians who volunteered their time and services: **Drs. Richard N. Bradley, Kenneth G. Gould, Jr., Betty A. Halpern, Clare A. Hawkins, George S. Leventon, Shelley Sekula Gibbs, Rafael Verduzco and Elizabeth L. Yang.**

TMA Payment Advocacy Consultations—HCMS hosted private, 30-minute consultations with TMA reimbursement experts April 11-13 at the HCMS offices to assist practices with their reimbursement questions. Thirty-one practices participated.

HCMS Spring Business Expo—Nearly 200 physicians attended the HCMS Business Expo on April 14 at Reliant Center. More than 60 exhibitors were available to share information about products and services beneficial to physicians' practices. Also, the Expo held three free CME seminars, covering topics on electronic medical records, Medicare Part D and medical liability. The Fall Expo is scheduled for Oct. 20.

Dr. McGovern Recognized by AMA—The AMA Foundation presented its President's Award to Dr. John P. McGovern. The award honors an individual who advances health care through dedication to medical education, research or public service. HCMS nominated Dr. McGovern.

Branch Meetings for Ethics CME—The six branches (East, West, Southeast, North, Southwest, and Central City) of HCMS held ethics CME meetings in the spring. The meeting topics included: cost analysis, informed consent, economy of health care, medical liability, and managing difficult patients.

Baylor College of Medicine—HCMS staff gave a legislative update to the AMA, TMA and HCMS student members at Baylor College of Medicine on Feb. 27.

Business of Medicine—HCMS staff met with the Texas Women's University on Feb. 13 to discuss collaborative programs regarding Business of Medicine education. HCMS staff gave a Business of Medicine presentation to The University of Texas Medical Branch faculty and to the medical staff of Oak Bend Medical Center.

Your Doctor Program—HCMS and TMA staff met with BlueCross BlueShield of Texas and Your Doctor Program representative, Dr. Kim Dunn, on Feb. 15 to discuss a potential collaborative project.

Texan Plus Meeting—HCMS staff met with representatives from Texan Plus, a Medicare Advantage Plan, on Feb. 20 to discuss physician issues and health information technology resources.

Houston Community College—On Feb. 23, HCMS and TMA staff held a conference call to discuss the possibility of Houston Community College receiving CME for physician education. On March 2, HCMS staff met with Houston Community

College to further discuss its educational endeavors to formulate courses for physicians and their staff.

Media/Speaker Training—On Feb. 22, HCMS held a media/speaker's training for HCMS Executive Board members. Brent Annear of TMA conducted a two-hour media/speaker training for 2 hours of CME credit at HCMS. The session included on-camera training, individual critiques, bridging techniques, and message development skills. Participants were: **Dr. Charlotte B. Alexander**, HCMS Southwest Branch president; **Dr. Bernard M. Gerber**, HCMS vice president; **Dr. A. Tomas Garcia III**, HCMS president elect; **Dr. Philip A. Matorin**, HCMS Board of Ethics chair; **Dr. Priscilla Ray**, former HCMS president; and **Dr. Arlo F. Weltge**, HCMS Central City Branch president.

Health Plan Survey Approved—The HCMS Executive Board approved having the University of Houston - Clear Lake formulate a survey to rate commercial health plans.

Council of Young Physicians—More than 100 young physicians attended the HCMS Council of Young Physicians meeting on April 18, chaired by **Dr. Yvonne Chu**. One-hour of ethics CME was available at the meeting, entitled "Creating a Winning Team: Recruitment, Retention, Training and Termination."

Indian Doctors Association Gala—HCMS President **Dr. Michael V. Kelly II**, TMA President **Dr. William Hinchey** and TMA Alliance President Mrs. Mia Price spoke at the "Bowties & Bangles" gala on May 5. **Dr. Kiran Sharma** was installed as the organization's president.

HCMS Meets with Quad Agencies—HCMS physicians and staff joined in a meeting with the Quad Agencies on April 20. The Quad Agencies meet on a monthly basis and is comprised of the directors of Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services, City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services, Harris County Hospital District, and Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority. The meeting centered on legislative issues as well as public health issues ranging from tuberculosis to behavior health funding and resources.

TexMed 2007—HCMS candidates were victorious in three of the four elections at the recent House of Delegates meeting at TexMed on April 26-28. **Dr. William H. Fleming III** was re-elected Speaker of the House of Delegates and **Drs. Michael E. Speer** and **A. Tomas Garcia III** were re-elected to the Board of Trustees. Unfortunately, **Dr. Priscilla Ray** was defeated by Dr. Josie Williams in a hard fought and closely contested race for president-elect of the TMA. The Delegates adopted 11 and referred one resolution from HCMS. None of the HCMS resolutions was defeated. They ranged

from anti-trust relief and reimbursement issues to sham peer review and studying use of hypothermia.

TMA Anson Jones Awards—**Dr. Art Klawitter** and HCMS and TMA staff went to the media stations on March 29 and surprised the winners of the TMA Anson Jones Journalism Awards. Awards were presented to: Jason Whitely and Chris Desmond at KHOU-TV for their story on organ donation and a citation of merit award went to Patricia Gras at KUHT-TV (Houston PBS) for her story on sleep disorders.

County Leaders Met—HCMS President **Dr. Michael V. Kelly II** and HCMS President Elect **Dr. A. Tomas Garcia III** met with presidents and president elects from 17 other Texas county societies at the conclusion of the TMA Winter Conference. The leaders outlined their plans for the year and areas where TMA could assist. Dr. Kelly asked for TMA assistance with the managed care companies' flawed attempts to measure quality, the Texas Medical Board and prohibiting chiropractors from performing school physicals.

First Tuesdays at the Capitol—Approximately 110 HCMS physicians, Alliance members, medical students, and staff joined others from around the state and visited lawmakers in Austin on the first Tuesdays of February, March, and April for TMA's First Tuesday at the Capitol. Hundreds of white coats could be seen walking the halls of the Capitol and many were visible in the Gallery during the Governor's State of the State address. Approximately 410 First Tuesday participants took part in a pep rally on Children's Health Insurance Program on April 13. HCMS thanks the Harris County contingent for meeting with each member of the county's House and Senate delegation and briefing them on medicine's legislative agenda for the 80th session.

Media Coverage—HCMS has had many positive stories published or aired in the media. Stories appeared on the licensing time for the Texas Medical Board, HISD using chiropractors and nurse practitioners to conduct physicals, emergency department issues, Medicare, the uninsured, Blue Compare, stroke awareness, cardiology issues, Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt's health care plan, locum tenens, branch societies, HCMS 10,000th member, McGovern Award, AMA Award. Physicians included in the coverage were: former HCMS President **Dr. Diana L. Fite**, former HCMS President **Dr. Michael E. Speer**, **Dr. Arlo F. Weltge**, HCMS President Elect **Dr. A. Tomas Garcia III**, **Dr. Spencer Berthelsen** and former TMA President **Dr. Ladon W. Homer**, HCMS President **Dr. Michael V. Kelly II**, and **Drs. Ginger Cathey**, **Robert M. Komorn**, **Frank A. Redmond**, **Robert W. Fayle**, **Charlotte B. Alexander**, **Liliana Diaz**, **Armando J. Jarquin**, **Kulvinder S. Bajwa**, **Scott P. Aarons**, **Mary F. Hewitt**, **Mohammad R. Khoshnevis-Asl**, **James J. Bernick**, **Dexter G.**

Turnquest, **Jonathon R. Russell**, **Mohsin K. Bajwa**, **Thomas R. Newton**, **Edward C. Schatte**, **Janette K. Bateman**, **Kenneth W. Hollis**, **Glen B. Garner**, **Miguel A. Gomez III**, **Dwane G. Broussard**, **Mina K. Sinacori**, **Vijayaprakash Sreenarasimhaiah**, **Ralph Feigin**, **Lewis E. Foxhall**, and **John P. McGovern**. Coverage included stories in the *New York Times*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Houston Business Journal*, *KUHF-Radio (NPR)*, *Distinctions*, *Texas Medical Center News*, and local television stations. HCMS participates in a conference call twice a month with TMA, the Dallas, San Antonio, Bexar, Tarrant, Travis and El Paso County Medical Societies to develop communication advocacy campaign strategies.

AMA Focus Groups—HCMS staff attended American Medical Association (AMA) focus groups held on March 26 and 27 in Houston to get input from residents and academic physicians about issues important to them. Residents stated a need for extra sleep and leisure time, as well as a need for help with negotiating contracts (i.e., office, employment, managed care, etc.), financial planning (i.e., paying off medical school debts, insurance, etc.), and mentoring. The academic physicians expressed concerns about funding cuts, uninsured patients, unfunded mandates to increase class sizes, and the necessity to focus on practice income to support their teaching. Their opinions of the AMA and what they need from AMA will be included in AMA's final report.

Science Engineering Fair—The Science Engineering Fair was held on March 23 at the Brown Convention Center. HCMS thanks the members of the HCMS Retired Physician Organization and HCMS physicians who served as judges: **Drs. Allen Catterson**, **Bruce Edison**, **Hai Nguyen**, **Kenneth Gould, Jr.**, **William Powell II**, and **Shawn Funk**. Awards were given in: Junior Division, Ninth Grade Division, Senior Division – laboratory, and Senior Division – non-laboratory.

Aetna Meeting—The HCMS Board on Socioeconomics met with **Dr. David Valdez**, senior medical director of Aetna Texas and Oklahoma, regarding the Aexcel Program (economic credentialing) and Transparency Program (posting physician contracted rates on Aetna's Web site) on April 5.

CIGNA Meetings—HCMS physicians and staff met with Dr. Jeffrey Kang, chief medical officer at CIGNA Corporate, to discuss the CIGNA Care Network (economic credentialing network) on March 13.

Medicare's Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI)—HCMS staff have participated on several of TMA's audio conferences to learn more about PQRI and the bonus payment program that starts July 1.