SGR Saga Continues

As 2013 ended, Congress gave itself until March 31, 2014, to come up with a permanent fix for the flawed Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula. Both the House Ways & Means and Senate Finance Committees have produced bills and now are working on a compromise that can pass both houses of Congress. While there are many issues in play, the most important for legislators is how to pay for the fix. The most recent Congressional Budget Office estimate places the price tag for the repeal of the SGR at $116 billion over the next 10 years. At a Dec. 11 markup of legislation to repeal the SGR, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) noted that the Congress has already spent $150 billion on temporary patches in past years.

Even though Congress has until March 31 of this year, Chairman Baucus has an incentive to find a compromise sooner than that. He has been nominated to be the U.S. Ambassador to China, and is eager to get the SGR repeal done before his Senate confirmation hearings.

HCMS and the TMA continue to work with Rep. Kevin Brady (R – The Woodlands) to include Medicare regulatory reforms into this bill. Please continue to check the HCMS website, www.hcms.org, for updates.

Presented by the Board of Medical Legislation

United drops physicians from network

UnitedHealthcare (UHC) dropped approximately 1,100 Harris County physicians and thousands more throughout the United States from its Medicare Advantage Plans. The Harris County Medical Society is collecting data regarding the narrowing of these networks.

If you are a physician who was deselected from the UHC Medicare Advantage Plan networks, please assist with the data collection by sending the following information via fax to HCMS at 713-528-0951, or via email at paymentadvocacy@hcms.org.

Please send HCMS this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th># of Patients Affected</th>
<th>Zip Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

HCMS/HAM 2014 Installation of Officers - HCMS Installed its First Hispanic Woman President

The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) and the Houston Academy of Medicine (HAM) installed their new officers Jan. 17, at the HCMS/HA M Installation of Officers & Leadership Recognition, at the Petroleum Club of Houston.

Senator Joan Huffman was the keynote speaker welcoming into office the 2014 HCMS President Elizabeth Torres, MD, and 2014 HAM President Kimberly E. Monday, MD, as well as the other HCMS and HAM officers. During the evening, HAM honored Samuel L. Katz, MD, from Duke University School of Medicine, with the John P. McGovern Compleat Physician Award. This national award recognizes a physician who embodies excellence, humane and ethical care, and commitment to medical humanities.

Dr. Elizabeth Torres, board-certified internist and fellow of the American College of Physicians, was installed as the 113th president of HCMS and the first Hispanic woman president of HCMS. She is the fifth woman to be president of HCMS. Since 1986, she has enjoyed private practice, serving the south Houston and Sugar Land areas. She received her medical education from Baylor College of Medicine and her residency training at Baylor College of Medicine and New Hanover Memorial Hospital in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Dr. Torres has hospital affiliations with Memorial Hermann Sugar Land, Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital, West Houston Hospital, Methodist Hospital-Sugar Land, and St. Luke’s Sugar Land Hospital.
When Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) was founded in 1903, Dr. Minnie Archer was the sole female in the 38-physician body. Although the number of women physicians belonging to HCMS has grown considerably over the years, the office of the presi- dency eluded women physicians until Dr. Betty Stephenson was elected to the presidency in 1982. Since then, another three women have held that position. I’m number five. That fact alone is a remarkable achievement of both of us. HCMS and Houston Academy of Medicine (HAM) are both women physicians. That’s first and is historically the best part that is will happen again, as women are being admitted to medical school classes now. While women make up only 33 percent of our total membership, the number of our Young Physician members, those age 40 and under, are women physicians.

How did come to be here? The path to this moment seemed improbable. I would describe myself as a second-generation Mexican-American woman. I was a product of public school, partici- pating in integration, and first to graduate from college in my family. I was a beneficiary of affirmative action. I had careers from phle- botomist to hospital lab technician, and research lab technician before going to medical school. I owe a debt of gratitude to all my family and teachers, especially my Mom, who taught me to rise above adversity, and my husband David, who certainly is my better half. Also, I want to take a moment to recognize the unsung heroes, the spouses of all our physicians for their patience, support and understanding.

Although over the last few years, the house of medicine has been turned on its head with the Affordable Care Act. I feel this year will be the most challenging so far due to the deadlines and penalties created by multiple new regulations, most of which have not yet proven to make health care better for patients. There is a huge burden of data entry that falls upon individual physicians to input information into an electronic health record (EHR) when it is not done in the patient's record. As a physician, I feel that the penalties created for this do not make our system any better. We must document that we have used a clinical support system, we need to prove we have reviewed specific disease-related targets for each patient, like LDL, target, HbA1C, eye exam, foot exam and lipid goals for diabetic patients. As there are more than 200 PQRS measures, it is easy to see how one physician has multiple condi- tions, such as diabetes, heart disease and asthma, can require a sig- nificant amount of time to document all the applicable measures. Each one of these data entry mandates is like having a flashing and siren going off in the exam room, while trying to see your patient for a routine checkup in the best environment possible for your patient. So I should focus on documenting PQRS measures so I can qualify for additional revenue to help pay EHR or focus on the patient? While I will always focus on the patient, it is likely I should not be able to qualify for additional funds due to time constraints. This blindly following the system is being stressed, it will take a team of individuals to accomplish this task.

Secondly, we need to improve patient care by evaluating treat- ments for specific illnesses that are consuming a large portion of health care dollars: heart disease, depression, and breast cancer. We need to deter- mine specific treatment guidelines that offer the most cost-effective therapy while keeping our patients informed. Although it is in our state's interest to have guidelines, it is the physician who must decide what treat- ments are needed for each patient. We know we can and must improve overall patient care and outcomes, but if we can't take the time to evaluate each individual's health care risks and needs, how will we be able to treat them? If we find ourselves overwhelmed by the need to enter data into EHRs, how can we focus on our patients? Each physician must write the same data for each patient to prove we are providing a level of care. It is not just having the data in the patient's record; it is specifically placing that information in a specific field, so that information is retrievable via data mining. We must document that we have used a clinical support rule. We must prove we have reviewed specific disease related targets for each patient, like LDL, target, HbA1C, eye exam, foot exam and lipid goals for diabetic patients. As there are more than 200 PQRS measures, it is easy to see how one physician has multiple condi- tions, such as diabetes, heart disease and asthma, can require a sig- nificant amount of time to document all the applicable measures. Each one of these data entry mandates is like having a flashing and siren going off in the exam room, while trying to see your patient for a routine checkup in the best environment possible for your patient. So I should focus on documenting PQRS measures so I can qualify for additional revenue to help pay EHR or focus on the patient? While I will always focus on the patient, it is likely I should not be able to qualify for additional funds due to time constraints. So it's easy to see how focusing on the system is being stressed, it will take a team of individuals to accomplish this task.

Lastly, we need patients to understand how these issues affect their health and have the opportunity to have a voice in determining the future of their health care policies. There are politically active and concerned citizens that are willing to help shape change, but aren't aware of the impact of government mandates on patient care. We need informed voters to hold legislators accountable for these actions. HCMS has worked with legislators and has found champions, such as U.S. Congress Ted Poe, who is working to reduce regulatory burdens and delay ICD-10, and U.S. Congressman Kevin Brady, who is working to replace the SGAR formula. At a state level, we heard earlier about the important regulatory changes spearheaded by State Senator Huffm an. Whereas, we have made some headway toward the reduction of regulatory burdens, it's like we're playing a normal game like whack-a-mole. However, there is no real reward, and it’s not a game.

These are just a few of the challenges we are facing this year. I’m honored to serve you for our profession and our patients. Please keep active in the Harris County Medical Society and in your specialty societies so we can continue to fight whatever lies ahead and fervently protect the patient/physician relationship.

Elizabeth Torres, MD President
HCMS & TMA provide answers about the Marketplace

Marketplace Grid: Answers questions for you and your staff.
To assist physicians and their staff members talk with patients about the new federal health reform law, the Health Insurance Marketplace (TMA) is creating a grid with information on six health insurance plans offering different products to patients in Harris County. To view and download this tool, go to www.hcms.org and click on Health Insurance Marketplace, then click on Marketplace Health Insurance Summary Grid.

Yes, Doc: Questions answers for your patients and you.
Given the vast amount of confusion among patients and difficulties Marketplace confusing physicians, Texas Medical Association (TMA) is continuing to roll out more information on the Health Insurance Marketplace answer your and your patients’ questions. For the next six to eight weeks, TMA will produce “Hey Doc” segments that address two basic themes.
1. New changes: what do I need to know now?
2. Things patients can do to reduce some of the burden (administrative and/or financial) on physicians’ offices.
For the schedule and more information, go to www.texmed.org/beyond or www.hcms.org and click on Answers to your Marketplace questions.

Medserv Spotlight

Medserv Employment Service Devision Recognized
Medserv’s Employment Services Division provides direct hire permanent placement of clinical and administrative staff to Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) member practices, including mid-level practitioners and practice administrators. It is a member benefit, with rates usually discounted at 50 percent, compared to other agencies in Houston. The Employment Services Division of Medserv was recently recognized by the Houston Business Journal as one of Houston’s largest permanent placement firms. In addition to the discounted rates, Medserv offers numerous free resources. They include:
Greater Houston Medical Office Salaries Guide
The guide outlines positions Medserv filled at medical practices in the Greater Houston area within the past year. It is a great resource to analyze a practice’s pay structure and the competitiveness of that structure with other practices in the city.
Employment Resources Guide
The guide provides information on completing criminal background checks, drug testing, Texas employment laws, and more for practices hiring on their own.

Nurse Practitioner Agreements in the State of Texas
In Texas, delegating prescriptive authority and other aspects of medical care to an advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP) requires an agreement. To view the TMA information and the specialty society IC D-10 resource grid, visit www.hcms.org and click on Health Information Technology, and then click on Incentive Programs.

To receive email reminders on upcoming deadlines or important developments in health information technology, sign up for HCMS Direct by going to www.hcms.org and click on News, then click on HCMS Direct. For additional questions, please email quality@hcms.org.

Meetings for CME & more

Network with colleagues in your community, enjoy dinner, and receive ethics CME credit at your Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) Branch meetings. The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) is dedicated to enabling physicians to network within their smaller communities. Each branch meets three times a year and includes refreshments or dinner and drinks, as well as continuing medical education (CME) credit, usually for ethics CME. New members and physicians in their first and second year of practice (usually for ethics CME) are invited to these meetings for free!
To register for your upcoming branch meetings or to see other upcoming branch meetings in your community, go to www.hcms.org and select Meetings RSVPs in the left-hand margin.
Upcoming meetings are:
East Branch - Thurs, Feb. 6
Did You Miss the HIPAA Omnibus Protecting Patient Privacy and Patient Safety, 1 hour Ethics CME, TMTL credit
Speaker: Sarah Fontenot, BSN, JD
6 p.m. – Networking & Social Hour
7 p.m. – Dinner & Program
Goose Creek Country Club, Baytown
Western Branch - Thurs., Feb. 6
Speaker: Donna Kinney, TMA
6 p.m. – Social Hour & Networking
7 p.m. – Dinner & Program
Tel: Within Harris Memorial City
Southwest Branch - Wed., Feb. 19
Speaker: Donna Kinney, TMA
6 p.m. – Social Hour & Networking
7 p.m. – Dinner & Program
In Braeburn Country Club, Bayside
Central Branch - Thurs., Feb. 27
Speaker: Donna Kinney, TMA
6 p.m. – Social Hour & Networking
7 p.m. – Dinner & Program
Trevisio Restaurant
North Branch - Thurs., March 4
Show Me the Money: How to Keep What the Government Takes - 1 hour Ethics CME
Speaker: Dianne Love, PhD
6:00 p.m. – Networking & Social Hour
7:00 p.m. – Dinner & Program
Northgate Country Club
Southeast Branch - Thurs., March 20
Rockets Game, Ethics CME for home study
6:00 – 8:00 p.m. – Social & Networking with light dinner
Toyota Center – Legends Bar

HIT Parade

Informal review for 2014 e-prescribing (eRx) penalty
Individual physicians or group practices who are receiving a 2 percent eRx penalty in 2014 may apply for an informal review through Feb. 28, 2014. Physicians or groups should submit their eRx informal review request via email to the informal review mailbox at eRxInformalReview@cms.hhs.gov. Note: The 2 percent 2014 penalty will be deducted from every traditional Medicare Part B Fee for Service payment you receive for date-of-service 2014.

You can apply for 2013 eRx penalty
Individual physicians and group practices who were not able to report the 8553 code on their claim forms 25 times in 2013 can still report 2013 eRx events through a qualified registry and receive a 2013 0.5 percent eRx incentive. For a qualified registry, go to www.hcms.org, click Health Information Technology, then click on Incentive Programs. Note: This method will not help you avoid the 2 percent 2014 eRx penalty.

Meaningful Use (MU) means no eRx penalty
Individual physicians or group practices who were able to successfully attest to a full year or 90 days of reporting MU in 2012, or the first six months of 2013, also avoid the two percent 2014 eRx penalty. Individual physicians or group practices do not have to file a hardship exemption. This will be automatically calculated by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). For more information to go to www.hcms.org, click on Health Information Technology, then click on Incentive Programs.

To receive email reminders on upcoming deadlines or important developments in health information technology, sign up for HCMS Direct by going to www.hcms.org and click on News, then click on HCMS Direct. For additional questions, please email quality@hcms.org.

Source: CMS

Business of Medicine

ICD-10 transition is here
Health care is undergoing many changes and one of the big changes in 2014 includes transitioning from the International Classification of Disease 9 (ICD-9) to ICD-10. This switch will need to be completed by Oct. 1, 2014. In order to have a successful transition and to avoid disruption to the practices’ cash flow, it is imperative to begin planning, testing and training for the change right now. In an effort to assist physicians make the transition to ICD-10, HCMS has gathered specialty society information and tools to help make what you need more efficient. Additionally, the Texas Medical Association (TMA) has several tools to assist physicians make the ICD-10 transition.
To view the TMA information and the specialty society ICD-10 resource grid, visit www.hcms.org and click on Health Information Technology, then click on ICD-10, then click on ICD-10 Specialty Grid.

ICD-10 Countdown: 35 Weeks and 3 days or 241 days
As of Feb. 1, in 35 weeks and three days the health care industry will transition from ICD-9 to ICD-10 on Oct. 1. NOW is the time to start preparing. The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) can help direct you to resources to assist in your preparation. Go to www.hcms.org and click on Health Information Technology, then ICD-10.CM.

Medicaid Corner

IT assistance for Medicaid physician specialists
Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has partnered with Gulf Coast Regional Extension Center (GCRC) to provide free technical assistance to Medicaid physician specialists who specialize in Cardiology, Endocrinology, Pulmonary Disease, and Psychiatry. The GCRC can assist in selecting and implementing meaningful use of certified EHR products, support with privacy and security assessments, and technical assistance. To find out if you are eligible for technical assistance in the Texas Medicaid EHR Incentive Program, contact the Gulf Coast REC at 713-500-3479.

Source: Texas Regional Extension Centers (REC) provided by HCMS Board on Social Economics

www.hcms.org / Harris County Physician Newsletter / February 1, 2014 3

We’ll help take care of business so you can focus on what matters most.

Services for Health Care Professionals:
• Assistance in establishing new practices
• Business entity selection
• Bookkeeping services
• Payroll services
• Preparation of financial statements
• Practice valuations
• Business Advisory Services, including internal controls audit, insurance & Medicaid claims auditing

713.667.9147 www.bvicpa.com

www.hcms.org

Harris County Physician Newsletter / February 1, 2014 / www.hcms.org

3
Exchanging and the many other regulations coming your way that include you. Ensure access to the HCM S and TMA Payment Advocacy renewed your membership for 2014, please do so right away to avoid your support. Maintain your presence in the five HCM S/TMA print, electronic, and smart phone membership databases so that colleagues can find you. Ensure access to the HCM S and TMA Payment Advocacy Department to receive actionable updates on the Marketplace Insurance Exchange and the many other regulations coming your way that include incentives as well as penalties. HCM S and TMA offer more than 100 member benefits to meet the needs of physicians in every setting and practice size. Renewing your dues is fast and easy. Use any of the options listed:

1. Detach the payment slip included in your dues statement and mail with your check or credit card payment to the address on the form;
2. Renew online;
3. Set up an interest-free monthly payment plan by contacting HCMS at 713-524-4267, ext. 243, or regina_palasota@hcms.org.

Your 2013 membership expired on Jan. 1, 2014. Please renew today. If you have questions, contact HCMS at 713-524-4267. HCM S and TMA are here to serve you and rely on your continued support.

Risk Management What do you need to know?

Join us at the upcoming Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) Business Expo for a day dedicated to risk management. Three ethics continuing medical education (CME) seminars will focus on managing the risks associated with staff recruitment, retention and termination, physician delegation, and termination of the physician/patient relationship. The Lunch & Learn seminar (not a CME) will focus on risk management topics:

- Physician delegation; and
determination of the physician/patient relationship.

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Departments to receive actionable updates on the Marketplace Insurance incentives as well as penalties. HCM and TMA offer more than 100 you. Ensure access to the HCM and TMA Payment Advocacy electronic and smartphone membership databases so that colleagues can find your support. Maintain your presence in the five HCM/TMA print, electronic and digital member promotional and training materials. The membership renewal form is designed to be as easy as possible and you should have received it in the mail. If you have questions, contact HCM at 713-524-4267. HCM and TMA are here to serve you and rely on your continued support.

Have you renewed your membership?
The Harris County Medical Society/Texas Medical Association (HCM/TMA) memberships are investments in the medical profession, in your patients, and in your community. If you have not renewed your membership for 2014, please do so right away to avoid interruption of your HCM and TMA services. HCM, TMA, and HCM/TMA need your support. Maintain your presence in the five HCM/TMA print, electronic and smartphone membership databases so that colleagues can find you. Ensure access to the HCM and TMA Payment Advocacy Departments to receive actionable updates on the Marketplace Insurance Exchange and the other many regulations coming your way that include incentives as well as penalties. HCM and TMA offer more than 100 member benefits to meet the needs of physicians in every setting and practice size. Renewing your dues is fast and easy. Use any of the options listed below to complete your renewal:

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Changes to CMS 1500 claim form: Workers’ Comp
The Texas Department of Insurance Division of Workers’ Compensation ( DWC ) is hosting a series of educational sessions entitled “Texas Workers’ Compensation Paper Billing Form Changes” at the Houston field office on Thursday, Feb. 6. The training will help physicians and their staff with the new medical billing procedures regarding medical bills submitted on or after April 1, 2014. The session will provide information on the following topics:

- Comparison of the old and new requirements for medical billing form;
- Deadline for using the new form and requirements;
- Medical Fee Dispute Resolution process;
- Available resources from the DWC and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services.

To learn more or to register for this event, go to www.hcms.org, then click on Business of Medicine, and then click on Workers’ Compensation. Source: Texas Department of Insurance Presented by the HCM Board on Social Security

HCM/HAM 2014 Installation of Officers
Continued from page 1
During her medical career, she has been very involved with organized medicine. She belongs to the Texas Medical Association, American College of Physicians, American Medical Association (AMA), and Hispanic American Medical Association of Houston.
Dr. Torres has held numerous positions at hospitals, including Vice-Chief of Staff at St. Luke’s Hospital, Vascular Laboratory Director at St. Luke’s Hospital, and Clinical Assistant Professor at Houston Baptist University. In her community, she has presented numerous health education programs and served on the boards of the Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce, American Cancer Society and Fort Bend County Women’s Center. She currently presents to the National Youth Leadership Program, which promotes careers in medicine to high school students.
She has been involved with organized medicine and other groups, holding various positions throughout the Houston area, which include being on the Board of Directors of the Healthcare Association (HAM), a member of the Heart Failure Workgroup of the Physician Consortium for Performance Improvement (convened by the AMA), a member of the TMA Council on Scientific Affairs, president of the Southwest Branch of HCM, a member of the General Internal Medicine Society, member of the Healthcare Association Committee for Vaccine Policy Collaborative Initiative, a HCM alternate delegate to TMA (2002), a HCM delegate to TMA (2003 to present), secretary/treasurer of HCM, a member of the HCM Board of Medical Legislation, and a member of the HCM Executive Board and HAM Board of Trustees.
Dr. Kimberly Monday, a neurologist at the Houston Neurological Institute, was installed as the 2014 president of the Houston Academy of Medicine (HAM). Dr. Monday holds board certifications from the American Academy of Neurology, American Academy of Sleep Medicine, and all of the board’s fields of interest. She also holds a masters degree in public health and a doctorate degree in neurology.

You can find her at the dealership; and financing options include: finding a vehicle at the best prices and the best convenience; providing a trusted consultation service; and getting the most out of every dollar spent. To get started, go to www.hcmsgroups.com and click on the HCM Auto Program box at the top of the page, or contact HCM Auto Director Phil Hornek at phornek@hcms.org or 713-843-7185.

Public Health Focus - The Flu
The flu is currently widespread throughout the Houston area. In the United States flu activity typically peaks in January or February, but it can continue to occur as late as May. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year. Even for people who are too old to get a live vaccine, if you are a health care provider, please consider offering the flu vaccine during each visit. Every flu season is different, and the flu can affect each person differently. Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others.

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Deadlines for using the new form and requirements; and click on the ad for the Fall Business Expo on the www.houstonphysicians.org website. Source: HCMS/Phenix and HDHIS Presented by the HCM Community Health Affairs and Communications Committee.

www.hcmsgroups.com / www.hcms.org / Harris County Physician Newsletter / February 1, 2014

HCM Auto Program
Among the many benefits of the Harris County Medical Society (HCM) is a FREE full concierge service Auto Program offered to members, their staff and family. This program can remove car shopping hassles from your busy work schedule as well as the aggravation that comes with purchasing a new vehicle. The program includes: finding a vehicle at the best price; arranging a test drive at your convenience at the dealership; and financing or refinancing terms at competitive rates using the leverage of the group to arrange financing at low interest rates. We have new vehicle rates starting at 1.6 percent available with approved credit. The program is fully financed by close to 30 participating dealers. No charges of any kind are applied. To get started, go to www.hcms.org and click on the HCM Auto Program box at the top of the page, or contact HCM Auto Director Phil Hornek at phornek@hcms.org or 713-843-7185.
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7 p.m. – Dinner & Program
In The Westin Hotel – Memorial City

Southwest Branch - Wed., Feb. 19
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In Goose Creek Country Club, Baytown

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Speaker: Donna Kinney, TMA
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In Treviño Restaurant

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Show Me The Money: How To Keep What the Government Talks - 1 hour Ethics CME
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To view the TMA information and the specialty society ICD-10 resource grid, visit www.hcms.org and click on Health Information Technology, then click on ICD-10, then click on ICD-10 Specialty Grid.

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Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has partnered with Gulf Coast Regional Extension Center (GCRC) to provide free technical assistance to Medicaid physicians who specialize in Cardiology, Endocrinology, Pulmonary Disease, and Psychiatry. The GCRC can assist in selecting and implementing meaningful use of certified EHR products, support with privacy and security assessments, and notification & attestation assistance. To find out if you are eligible for technical assistance in the Texas Medicaid EHIncentive Program, contact the Gulf Coast RE at 713-500-3479.

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When Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) was founded in 1983, Dr. Minnie Archer was the sole female in the 38-physician hospital. Although, the number of women physicians belonging to HCMS has grown considerably over the years, the officer of the presi-
dency studied women physicians until Dr. Betty Stephenson was elected president in 2003. It is interesting to note that since then, three other women have held that position. I am number five. That fact is something to be proud of in the history of HCMS. Both the HCMS and Houston Academy of Medicine (HAM) are both women physicians. That’s first and is history! The best part is that it will happen again, as women physicians are doing well in medical school classes now. While women make up only 33 percent of our total membership, they are agreed to that statistic. None of our Young Physician members, those age 40 and under, are women physicians.

How did it come to be here? The path to this moment seemed improbable. I would describe myself as a second generation Mexican-American woman. I was a product of public school, partici-
pating in integration, and first to graduate from college in my family. I was a beneficiary of affirmative action. I had careers from phle-
botomist to hospital lab technician, and research lab technician before going to medical school. I love a debt of gratitude to all my family and teachers, especially my Mom, who taught me to rise above adversity, and my husband David, who certainly is my better half. Also, I want to take a moment to recognize the unsung heroes, the spouses of all our physicians for their patience, support and understanding.

Although over the last few years, the house of medicine has been in turmoil with the passing of the Affordable Care Act. I feel this year will be the most challenging so far due to the deadlines and penalties created by multiple new regulations, most of which have not yet been finalized to make health care better for patients. There is a huge burden of data entry that falls upon individual physicians to input data that is not prevention-oriented and can alone not perform this function. So now we hear that to take better care of our patients, we need a team approach, however, no one is able to tell us how we will pay for the team. That is why a lot of the reform is being stated, in the hope that physicians will be able to provide patient care.

We must document that we have used a clinical support rule. We must prove we have reviewed specific disease related targets for each patient, like LDL target, blood pressure, etc. 

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extends to 60% of patients attributing their health to preventative care. It’s not just having that information, it’s how we use it to evaluate each individual’s health care risks and needs, how will we be able to treat them? If we find ourselves overwhelmed by the need to enter data into EHRs, how can we focus on our patients? Each physician must write the same data for each patient, we are not proving a level of care. We do not just have one patient in a
mination in the patient’s record; it is specifically placing that information in a specific field, so that information is retrievable via data mining. We must document that we have used a clinical support rule. We must prove we have reviewed specific disease related targets for each patient, like LDL target, blood pressure, etc. 

MAILING LIST: Please contact us at HCMS@hcms.org for advertising rates.

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SGR Saga Continues

As 2013 ended, Congress gave itself until March 31, 2014, to come up with a permanent fix for the flawed Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula. Both the House Ways & Means and Senate Finance Committees have produced bills and now are working on a compromise that can pass both houses of Congress.

While there are many issues in play, the most important for legislators is how to pay for the fix. The most recent Congressional Budget Office estimate places the price tag for the repeal of the SGR at $116 billion over the next 10 years. At a Dec. 11 markup of legislation to repeal the SGR, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) noted that the Congress has already spent $150 billion on temporary patches in past years.

Even though Congress has until March 31 of this year, Chairman Baucus has an incentive to find a compromise sooner than that. He has been nominated to be the U.S. Ambassador to China, and is eager to get the SGR repeal done before his Senate confirmation hearings.

HCMS and the TMA continue to work with Rep. Kevin Brady (R – The Woodlands) to include Medicare regulatory reforms into this bill. Please continue to check the HCMS website, www.hcms.org, for updates.

Presented by the Board of Medical Legislation

HCMS/HAM 2014 Installation of Officers - HCMS Installed its First Hispanic Woman President

The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) and the Houston Academy of Medicine (HAM) installed their new officers Jan. 17, at the HCMS/HA M Installation of Officers & Leadership Recognition, at the Petroleum Club of Houston.

Senator Joan Huffman was the keynote speaker welcoming into office the 2014 HCMS President Elizabeth Torres, MD, and 2014 HAM President Kimberly Monday, MD, as well as the other HCMS and HAM officers. During the evening, HAM honored Samuel L. Katz, MD, from Duke University School of Medicine, with the John P. McGovern Complete Physician Award. This national award recognizes a physician who embodies excellence, humane and ethical care, and commitment to medical humanities.

Dr. Elizabeth Torres, board-certified internist and fellow of the American College of Physicians, was installed as the 113th president of HCMS and the first Hispanic woman president of HCMS. She is the fifth woman to be president of HCMS. Since 1986, she has enjoyed private practice, serving the southwest Houston and Sugar Land areas. She received her medical education from Baylor College of Medicine and her residency training at Baylor College of Medicine and New Hanover Memorial Hospital in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Dr. Torres has hospital affiliations with Memorial Hermann Sugar Land, Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital, West Houston Hospital, Methodist Hospital–Sugar Land, and St. Luke’s Sugar Land Hospital.

United drops physicians from network

UnitedHealthcare (UHC) dropped approximately 1,100 Harris County physicians and thousands more throughout the United States from its Medicare Advantage Plans. The Harris County Medical Society is collecting data regarding the narrowing of these networks.

If you are a physician who was deselected from the UHC Medicare Advantage Plan networks, please assist with the data collection by sending the following information via fax to HCMS at 713-528-0951, or via email at payment advocacy@hcms.org.

Please send HCMS this:

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<th>Specialty</th>
<th># of Patients Affected</th>
<th>Zip Code</th>
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