As a company founded by doctors for doctors, we believe that doctors deserve more than a little gratitude for an outstanding career. That’s why we created the “ Tribute!” Plan to reward our members for their loyalty to practicing medicine and their patients. To join our colleagues—become a member of The Doctors Company.

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As you can see, your membership and your incredible HCMS staff have worked to maintain knowledge of many changes in any affecting medicine. I am humbled by the dedication, and your patient volunteers and the HCMS staff. I extend my thanks and congratulations to them a job well done.

A final thought

While attending the annual Retired Physician Organization (RPO) meeting earlier this year, I heard a presentation from the Houston Zoo about conservation.

The Houston Zoo is the oldest city park in the United States. The zoo has an 80-acre sprawling wildlife park located in the heart of Houston. There are over 4,000 animals and 1,000 species in the collection. The zoo is known for its unique exhibits, such as the Houston Reptile Exhibit, the African Savannah, and the Asian Safari.

The Houston Zoo is a nonprofit organization that relies on memberships, donations, and ticket sales to fund its operations. The zoo is one of the most popular attractions in Houston, drawing over 2 million visitors each year.

The Houston Zoo is also dedicated to conservation efforts around the world. The zoo works with other organizations to protect endangered species, such as the Houston Zoo’s International Confluence Program, which focuses on the conservation of Asian elephants.

In addition to its exhibits and conservation efforts, the Houston Zoo is also committed to education. The zoo offers a variety of educational programs for all ages, including field trips, camp programs, and workshops.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Houston Zoo is a beloved landmark in Houston, and its commitment to conservation, education, and excellence is commendable. I encourage you to visit the Houston Zoo and learn more about its mission and programs.

For more information about the Houston Zoo, please visit their website at www.houstonzoo.org.

Elizabeth Torres, MD, FAAP
President, HCMS
January Calendar
Visit the calendar online at www.hcms.org

Quality Corner
Navigating through language barriers and creating cultural awareness

The ability to effectively and clearly communicate with patients can dramatically improve clinical outcomes. Clear communication encompasses a knowledge of the spoken language as well as cultural awareness. A Spanish speaking patient generally cannot communicate his or her symptoms to a physician who does not understand Spanish. In contrast, a physician who is aware of the higher prevalence of complications and disabilities of African Americans with diabetes will be more vigilant and effective at managing that diabetic patient. More than 90 languages are spoken in the Greater Houston area. A recent report from the Rice University Kinder Institute for Urban Research indicates Houston has become the most racially and ethnically diverse metropolitan area in the nation, even surpassing the New York metropolitan area. With all of these languages and ethnicities, cultural awareness is rising in significance. To help our members engage with their culturally diverse patients, the Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) has created a dedicated web page for cultural awareness and health literacy. HCMS has also developed several tools that can assist physician practices:

- The HCMS Language Grid has instructions on how to navigate websites for five of the major health plans in the Houston area to help your patients locate an in-network physician who speaks their language;
- HCMS is developing location specific health tip sheets that are one-page reports to note the cultural specific health issues for African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and Asian Americans. Completion of the documents is scheduled for the first quarter of 2015. For more information, visit www.hcms.org/practice-resources/quality/CulturalAwareness.

For additional assistance, contact quality@hcms.org.

Medicare Corner
2015 Medicare deductible and coinsurance

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has released information on the Medicare deductible and coinsurance for 2015. For information, visit www.cms.gov/medicare/medicare-basics/2015-medicare-cost-sharing.html. For additional assistance, contact practice-resources@hcms.org.

Public Health Focus
CDC’s Health Alert emails

Public Health Focus: herpes

• The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sends emails to keep you informed on emergency preparedness and other health topics, sign up for CDC’s Health Alert Network (HAN) Updates and alerts by going to https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCDC/subscriber/new.

In Memoriam
Gene E. Burke, MD, an addiction medicine physician and internist, died Nov. 5. He had been a member of HCMS since 1978.

Edward G. Mendelson, MD, an obstetrician/gynecologist, died Nov. 16. He had been a member of HCMS since 1978.

Enrique Vargas, MD, an obstetrician/gynecologist, died Nov. 19. He had been a member of HCMS since 1977.

For more information, visit www.txmed.org/firsttuesdays or call 800-880-1300, ext. 1661, for more information and to register.

TMA 2015 Winter Conference
Save the date for the 2015 Texas Medical Association (TMA) Winter Conference at the Hyatt Regency Austin, Jan. 30-31. For more information, go to www.txmed.org.

Team : A  C om prehensive G uide to O ptim izing Productivity and Q uality
needs to be m anaged as efficiently as possible. I nstitute new  efficiencies and you w ill find additional resources most likely leading to new  found profits.

A uto Program  D irector Phil H ornbeak w ill w alk you through the process to help you guide young m inds tow ard careers in the science and m edical fields.

R egister today for the Texas Medical A ssociation (TMA ) course Leading Your Clinical Practice Operations/Leading Your Clinical Team: A Comprehensive Guide to Optimizing Productivity and Quality. This course offers five AMA PRA Category 1 Credits. In today’s world of decreasing reimbursements, the clinical side of a medical practice needs to be managed as efficiently as possible. Institute new efficiencies and you will find additional resources most likely leading to new found profits. Leading Your Clinical Team provides guidance to physicians and new and experienced medical practice managers, with or without a clinical background.

The cost is $99 for TMA members and $149 for non-members. For more information about this course, go to txmed.inreachce.com/ and select Practice Operations/Leading Your Clinical Team: A Comprehensive Guide to Optimizing Productivity and Quality. For more CME courses, go to www.hcms.org/cme-programs.

Presented by the HCMS Community Health Improvement & Communications Committee

Optimize your productivity
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Presented by the HCMS Community Health Improvement & Communications Committee

Auto Program interest rates starting at 1.64%
Find your next vehicle through the FREE concierge service, the HCMS Auto Program. Auto Program Director Phil Hornbeak will walk you through the process to help you decide what to buy, where to buy and how much to pay for a car. This new HCMS member benefit puts you in control of the shopping experience by providing you with the information you need to make confident buying decisions.

HCMS is working with nearly 30 auto dealerships to offer HCMS members, their staff and family members, a hassle-free car purchasing experience. This program, financed by participating dealers, includes:

• Finding a vehicle (new or pre-owned) at the best price, arranging a test drive at your convenience; providing a trusted contact at the dealership; and financing or refinancing terms at competitive rates using the leverage of the group to arrange financing at low interest rates. New vehicle rates start at 1.64 percent for up to a five-year term, with approved credit. To begin, go to www.hcms.org and click on the HCMS Auto Program button at the top of the page, or contact HCMS Auto Program Director Phil Hornbeak at phornbeak@hcms.org or 713.868.3680.

Presented by the HCMS Membership Committee

HCMS offers a variety of membership services and programs to help physicians save on their malpractice insurance. maltur@hcms.org; 713.868.3680.

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January Calendar
Visit the calendar online at www.hcms.org

Thursday 1
HCMS office closed

Friday 2
6:30 p.m., HCMO Installation of Officers & Leadership Recognition: The Petroleum Club of Houston

Saturday 10
6:30 p.m., Arab American Medical Association Houston Chapter; Location: TBA

Monday 12
6:00 p.m., Houston Radiological Society, TBA

Tuesday 13
5:30 p.m., Houston Pediatric Society, Location: TBA

ACA insurance help
Open enrollment for Affordable Care Act (ACA) plans began Nov. 15, and runs through Feb. 15, 2015. Texas Medical Association Insurance Trust (TMAIT) advisors can help. Call 800-880-8181 or visit http://info.tmait.org/health. Or go to www.hcms.org/Practice-Resources/Payers/HealthInsurance-Marketplace/

Judges needed for science Engineering Fair
The 56th Annual Science Engineering Fair of Houston is in need of volunteer judges. The fair provides a great opportunity for physicians, residents and medical students to help guide young minds toward careers in the science and medical fields.

Optimize your productivity
Register today for the Texas Medical Association (TMA) course Leading Your Clinical Team: A Comprehensive Guide to Optimizing Productivity and Quality. This course offers five AMA PRA Category 1 Credits.

Public Health Focus
CDC’s Health Alert emails
Sign up for emergency preparedness and other health topics, sign up for CDC’s Health Alert Network (HAN) and more at go to https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/USCDC/subscriber/new

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Edward G. Mendelson, MD, an obstetrician/gynecologist, died Nov. 16. He had been a member of HCMS since 1978.

Enrique Vargas, MD, an obstetrician/gynecologist, died Dec. 3. Vargas had been a member of HCMS since 1997.

Quality Corner
Navigating through language barriers and creating cultural awareness
The ability to effectively and clearly communicate with patients can dramatically improve clinical outcomes. Clear communication encompasses a knowledge of the spoken language as well as cultural awareness. A Spanish speaking patient cannot clearly communicate his or her symptoms to a physician who does not understand Spanish. In contrast, a physician who is aware of the higher prevalence of complications and disabilities of African Americans with diabetes will be more vigilant and effective at managing that diabetic patient.

More than 90 languages are spoken in the Greater Houston area. A recent report from the Rice University Kinder Institute for Urban Research indicates Houston has become the most linguistically and culturally diverse metropolitan area in the nation, even surpassing the New York metropolitan area. With all of these languages and ethnicities, cultural awareness is rising in significance. To help our members engage with their culturally diverse patients, the Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) has created a Web page for cultural awareness and health literacy. HCMS also has developed several tools that can assist physicians: • The HCMS Language Grid has instructions on how to navigate websites for five of the major health plans in the Houston area to help your patients locate an in-network physician who speaks their language; and • HCMS has developed a cultural specific health tip sheets that are one-page reports to note the cultural specific health issues for African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and Asian Americans. Completion of the documents is scheduled for the first quarter of 2015. For more information, visit www.hcms.org/practice-resources/cultural awareness.html.

Medicare Corner
2015 Medicare deductible and coinsurance
The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has released information on the Medicare deductible and coinsurance for 2015:

2015 Part A – Hospital insurance (HI)
• Deductible: $1,260
• Coinsurance: $315 a day for 61st-90th day; $630 a day for 91st-150th day (lifetime reserve days); and $157.50 a day for 21st-100th day (skilled nursing facility coinsurance)

2015 Part B – Supplemental medical insurance (SMI)
• Deductible: $147 a year
• Coinsurance: 20 percent

For information on the 2015 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, go to www.hcms.org/Practice-Resources/Payers/Medicare/Fee Schedule/

First Tuesdays at the Capitol
A big change is coming to state government leadership, which is creating a tremendous opportunity for you to reengage with the Capitol. This means lawmakers will have to be engaged during the session to present some very bad decisions. We need you to protect your profession and your patients.

Join your colleagues for First Tuesdays and come to the Capitol to be a lobbyist the first Tuesday of each month during the session starting in February. Harris County Medical Society staff will make all your meeting appointments and place you on a team with your fellow physicians who want to communicate on the same topic.

Mark your calendars for Feb. 3, March 3, April 7, and May 5, then go to www.txmedtimes.org/tuebellastuesdays or call 800-880-1300, ext. 1361, for more information and to register.

TMA 2015 Winter Conference
Save the date for the 2015 Texas Medical Association (TMA) Winter Conference at the Hyatt Regency Austin, Jan. 30-31. For more information, go to www.txmed.org.


Public Health Focus: CDC predicting severe Flu season

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) warned of the severity of the upcoming flu season. "The CDC told us the flu shot that you got this year may not be as effective as you would hope... while flu vaccines are usually about 60 percent effective, this season it could be 40 percent," stated the CBS Evening News. Dr. Nancy Snyderman reported, "The CDC has issued a warning tonight about the flu virus... it has mutated, meaning that the flu shot or mist that millions of people got to protect themselves won't provide nearly as much protection as usual." The Washington Post (12/5, Bernstein) reported that "the government on Thursday recommended immediate vaccination for anyone who hasn't taken that precaution and urged people who come down with the flu to seek anti-viral medication from their doctors." According to the CDC announcement, five children have already died this year from the flu, and the strain of the virus circulating, H3N2, has been indicative of a severe flu season in three of the last 11 seasons. The strain has led to increased deaths and hospitalizations in past years. Dr. Thomas Frieden of the CDC noted that only one of every six adults have been vaccinated this year. Dr. Frieden also warned that the flu season is still far from over. He stated that "the flu season is usually from October through April." To read more about the flu season, visit http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/weekly.htm.

Renew your HCMS/TMA membership with interest-free installments

Your Harris County Medical Society/Texas Medical Association (HCMS/TMA) membership is an important investment in the medical profession. Make sure you continue to receive the benefits of HCMS and TMA by renewing your membership now. You now can renew your membership by paying eight interest-free payments of $95.01 (or $47.51 for physicians who are within one year of their last residency or fellowship program) if you sign up no later than Monday, Jan. 14. There are no interest or set-up fees. Payment plan benefits:

- Ensure that your HCMS/TMA member benefits are not interrupted, including your inclusion in the HCMS Pictorial Roster;
- Eliminate an administrative burden to your practice with automatic payments;
- Help HCMS save resources and reduce the environmental impact by limiting the number of paper notices HCMS sends you.

Enrollment is fast and easy and payments will be automatically deducted from your credit card on the 15th of each month. To set up your renewal with eight payments, call Regina Palasota at 713-324-4267, or email regina_palasota@hcms.org. Or go to www.texmed.org/join to renew online via a single payment. You may also renew by calling the TMA Knowledge Center at 1-800-881-7955.

Marketplace - Small Business Health Option Program (SHOP)

Open enrollment into the 2015 Marketplace (Insurance Exchange), as well as open enrollment into the Small Business Health Option Program (SHOP) began on Nov. 15, 2014. The SHOP was created to help small business owners obtain health care coverage for their employees. The program is only available to employers with less than 50 full-time employees. Employers with less than 25 full-time employees are eligible for a two-year tax credit, if their employees make $50,000 or less per year and the employer pays at least 50 percent of the premiums, then the employer can receive a tax credit for two years. Employers with less than 10 employees who earn on average less than $25,000 per year are eligible for a higher tax credit. Contact your accountant to see if your business qualifies. To learn more about the SHOP go to http://www.healthcare.gov/Practice-Resources/Payers/HealthInsurance-Marketplace/. If you are interested in learning about the individual Marketplace go to http://www.texmed.org/heydoc/.

HCMS Installation is Jan. 9

The Harris County Medical Society/Houston Academy Medicine (HCMS/ HAM) Installation of Officers and Leadership Recognition will be held at 6:30 p.m., Friday, Jan. 9, at the Petroleum Club of Houston. The new leaders and officers will be installed, which include 2015 HCMS President Bradford S. Patt, MD, and 2015 HAM President Lisa L. Ehlich, MD. For more information, go to www.hcms.org. Watch the mail for your invitation.