Tell your patients’ stories to the Texas Legislators

The 84th Texas Legislative session promises to be a critical one for Texas medicine and with the unusually high turnover in recent years, there are a lot of members who need to be educated about our issues. You went to Austin a few years ago and proved to be our most effective weapon. Now we need you to come back.

Please mark your calendar for the 2015 First Tuesdays at the Capitol: Feb. 3, March 3, April 7, and May 5.

Go to www.texmed.org/FirstTuesdays/ and register for one, two or all four of the days. The process is easy. The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) staff makes all the appointments and provides you with the briefing materials. All you need to do is show up at the Texas Medical Association (TMA) offices on Tuesday morning in your white coat and walking shoes.

Remember, lawmakers need to hear from their hometown doctors. You really do make a difference. Also, sign up for HCMS Direct emails on medical legislation. Go to www.hcms.org/news/subscribe_direct/.

Branch meetings offer ethic CMEs, networking and more

Don’t miss a great opportunity to network with colleagues in your area of town at your local HCMS Branch meeting. The branch covers six geographical areas, allowing physicians to develop collaborative relationships. Upcoming topics include:

- Impact of health reform, Medical Board hot buttons, marketing resources; EHR compliance risks; and dealing with difficult patients.
- Impact of health reform; Medical Board hot buttons; marketing resources; EHR compliance risks; and dealing with difficult patients.
- Speaker: Donna Kinney, CPA, TMA’s in-house expert on physician practice economics and operating costs
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As physicians, we know very well that decisions made by lawmakers in Austin and Washington can greatly affect our practice and our patients – sometimes positively and sometimes negatively.

The important thing to remember is that we all have a right and a duty to be a part of the legislative decision-making process. In between sessions, we complain about decisions the legislature made. We write letters to agencies to complain to the press and to our family and friends. Now is the time for action. We can really make a difference. You hear a lot about making your voice heard, and many think that just a click. It’s not. It really works.

Recently a physician asked Sen. Joan Huffman what we could do to help her during this legislative session. She said, “Come to Austin and tell your stories to me and my colleagues.”

At the start of this session more than half of the House members will be freshmen or sophomores and nearly a third of the Senate will be new to that body. Therefore, a significant number of lawmakers will be making decisions that affect medicine, which we have probably never heard of side the issue. I can guarantee you they will hear from the other side. Representatives from the trial bar, the insurance industry, the hospital industry and many non-physician providers flock to Austin to this time of year to push their agenda – and it usually has some impact on physicians and our patients.

A quick glance at some of Texas Medical Association’s (TMA) top priority issues for the session shows you what physicians are up against. TMA physicians will be advocating to:

- Hold health insurance companies accountable for creating and promoting adequate physician networks;
- Stop any efforts to expand scope of practice beyond what is safely permitted by non-physician practitioners’ education, training and experience;
- Protect physicians’ ability to charge for their services;
- Protect the patient-physician relationship from corporate intrusions.

As you can see, many of our top legislative priorities are in response to something other groups are doing which adversely affects us. This is why it is so critical that lawmakers hear from you. They don’t understand the business of medicine nor do they understand the clinical implications of many proposals. But that doesn’t mean they don’t care. Most of them do. As Sen. Huffman urged us, we need to hear from you. They won’t make the right bad decisions that hurt us or our patients because they know they’ll hear about it later from their constituents.

There are several things you can do to get involved. The best is to sign up and attend First Tuesdays at the Capitol. They happen every first Tuesday of the month during the session (Feb. 3, March 3, April 7, and May 5). If you’ve never gone before the process is very simple. HCMS staff makes all the appointments with our local elected officials and provides you with the briefing materials you’ll need. All you need to do is sign up with TMA and show up at the TMA offices on the first Tuesday morning of the month in your white coat and walking shoes. TMA will give you last minute instructions and handouts for the day. Then you will go off in teams with your colleagues to tell your stories and educate our lawmakers.

www.txmed.org/FirstTuesdays/ to register for one, two or all four of the days.

Sign up for TMA Legislative News Hotline at www.txmed.org/Profile/Subscriptions/ for the latest in legislative matters and watch your emails. There are times during the session when TMA or HCMS will ask you to help by sending emails or calling your legislators’ offices to make a big impact. You won’t be asked often, but when you are, it is because a large physician response is needed.

Finally, stay informed by signing up for HCMS Direct emails on medical legislation (www.hcms.org/news/subscribe/direct/), and continue to read your newsletter and visit the HCMS website, www.hcms.org, for the latest happenings in Austin.

We can and will make a difference for medicine and our patients with your participation.

**Tell your stories and make a difference**

Bradford Patt, MD
President

The Harris County Physician Newsletter

Editor: Greg Bernica, 713-899-9122
Publisher: Mary Cooper, 713-899-0900

Visit www.hcms.org, select Medverx, or call us at 713-526-7378.

**When it comes to hiring, Medserv has a better way.**

As the service arm of the Harris County Medical Society, we understand the value of your time and channel our talent to meet your needs and protect your practice. We stand behind our expert screening processes which include:

- Personalized Interviews
- Skills Assessment Testing
- Credential Verifications
- Reference Investigations
- Criminal Background Checks.

*Physicians needed for clinical trials for oncology.*

**Physician Needed for Clinical Trials**

The Johns H. McEwen Museum of Waterfowl
1515 Hermann Drive, Second Floor
Houston, TX 77004-7261

**Physician Needed for Clinical Trials**

For more information call 713-832-5257 or 1-800-322-0117.

**We will find the perfect candidate for you in the most cost-effective way.**

**Do You Have a Family Member Graduating from College?**

Need a new vehicle for your Graduate?

The HCMS Auto Program can help you locate the perfect vehicle, hassle free! This FREE HCMS member benefit is a concierge service available to physicians, staff and family members. We can help you identify the best deal so you can purchase a vehicle that is safe with good safety ratings, discounted, targeted leasing and discounted percentage rates. We have rates available as low as 1.6% for new vehicles and additional low rates for pre-owned vehicles.

Go to www.hcms.org/newsmembers/benefits/auto-program/ where you can complete a “Quick Request” for vehicle from any of our Participating Dealers, along with our online credit application to get the best rate and term.

Call us anytime or day: 713-836-1785. We look forward to serving you!
Volunteer to judge Science Engineering Fair

The Harris County Medical Society is calling on physicians, medical students and retired physicians to help judge the 56th Annual Science Engineering Fair of Houston, Saturday, Feb. 15, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Reliant Center. 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.

HCMS has participated by providing judges for the high school division for many years. The fair is held at the University of Houston Main Campus. For more information and to volunteer, contact Scott Atkins at 713-524-4267, ext. 269, or email scott_atkins@hcms.org.

Presented by the HCMS Community Health Improvement & Communications Committee

Participants are needed for D-Tag Tattoo Removal Program

Plastic surgeons and dermatologists are needed to participate in the City of Houston’s D-Tag Tattoo Removal Program, held one Saturday a month, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Judson W. Robinson Jr. Community Center.

Since 1997, Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) physicians have volunteered to help former gang members and teens participating in Houston’s Operation Gang Together re-enter mainstream society by removing their tattoos.

The D-Tag program has been very successful over the years. These youth can now enter the workforce as men and women free-of-tattoo because of the commitment of HCMS doctors. HCMS would like to extend a thank you to all those physicians who have participated in the D-Tag Program in 2014. HCMS D-Tag Chair and Founder Michael V. Kelly, MD; Melissa A. Bogle, MD; James F. Boynton, MD; Daniel J. Freet, MD; Christopher Livingston, MD; Michael Migden, MD; Roberto Montoya, MD; Ronald Rapini, MD; Steven J. Smith, MD; Charlotte Stelly-Seitz, MD; and Risikasree Subramanian, MD.

If you would like to join the efforts of these physicians and make a difference in the lives of these young adults, contact Scott Atkins at 713-524-4267, ext. 269, or email scott_atkins@hcms.org.

Presented by the HCMS Community Health Improvement & Communications Committee

Don’t lose your benefits

The Harris County Medical Society/Texas Medical Association (HCMS/TMA) memberships are investments in the medical profession, in patients, in your practice, and in your community. Your membership ensures your continued presence in the medical community, in your practice, and in your community.

To maintain your membership, please do the right thing by not allowing your membership to lapse. The deadline to renew your membership for 2015, please do so right away to avoid interruption of your HCMS and TMA benefits. Use any of the options listed below:

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 at www.texmed.org/join; or
3. Set up an interest-free eight-month payment plan by contacting HCMS at 713-524-4267, ext. 243, or scott_atkins@hcms.org. Submit contract by Feb. 13, and pay your dues through eight installments of $95.

For questions, contact HCMS at 713-524-4267. HCMS is here to serve you and relies on your continued support.

Presented by the HCMS Health Care Quality Committee

Marketing on a shoestring budget

Want to develop your patient base and referral network? The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) can help by building and enhancing your patient base is not easy. Regardless of whether you are a young physician developing your practice or an established physician facing a retiring referral base, it is important to know the tools available that can help you grow your practice. Many physicians assume that marketing is expensive and time consuming. It does not have to be. HCMS can help. Attend “Marketing 101: HCMS Resources to Develop Your Patient Base,” on Tuesday, Feb. 24, at the HCMS North Branch held at Northgate Country Club. The reception begins at 6 p.m., followed by dinner and the program at 7 p.m. The program is offered for one hour of ethics CME credit. Registration is required. To register, go to www.hcms.org/events/branch-meetings/

Save the Date for the Expo

The HCMS Spring Business Expo will be held on Saturday, April 11, at NRG Center (formerly Reliant Center). Three CMEs as well as a Lunch & Learn will be offered at the Expo. New ethics CME topics provided by TMAT will include: “Avoiding the Risk of Unfavorable Employment Practices: Preventing Discrimination and Harassment” and “Health Care False Claims, Whistleblower and Compliance and Update.” In addition, a non CME Lunch & Learn will be offered on “TEPAX 101: Your Guide to Legislative Empowerment.” To register online go to www.hcms.org/events/business-expo or call 713-524-4267.

Get the latest - Are you signed up?

The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) can deliver updates on news of interest that you choose directly to your email through HCMS Direct. You can choose to subscribe to the HCMS and Texas Medical Center enewsletters, health information technology, health care quality, medical legislative updates, CME opportunities, HCMS products and services, practice management & insurance information (your staff also can sign up to receive), and public health issues. To sign up, go to www.hcms.org/news/subscribe-direc.htm. It is free to sign up.

Business of Medicine

Human resource corner – The Marketplace and SHOP

Individual enrollment into the Marketplace

Open enrollment into the 2015 Individual Marketplace will close on Feb. 15, 2015. Individuals may be eligible to enroll into the individual marketplace after Feb. 15, 2015, if any of the following life events occur:

• Have a baby, adopt a child, or place a child for adoption;
• Get married;
• Lose other health coverage; and
• Be denied by Medicaid or CHIP.

Failure to obtain essential health care coverage could result in a tax penalty. The penalty in 2015 for not having coverage is calculated one of two ways (whichever is higher):

• 2 percent of yearly household income; or
• $235 per person for the year and $470 per couple under 18.

Enrollment into the SHOP

Enrollment into the Small Business Health Option Program (SHOP) is available to small business owners and their employees. Employees can enroll into the SHOP throughout the year. The program is only available to employers with less than 50 full-time employees.

• Employers could qualify for a two-year tax credit, if they have less than 25 full-time employees who make $50,000 or less per year and the employer pays at least 50% of the premium.
• Employers with less than 10 full-time employees who earn on average less than $25,000 per year are eligible for a higher tax credit. To determine if your business qualifies for the tax credit, please contact your accountant.

Tools for physicians and their staff

The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) has updated the 2015 Marketplace grid. This grid provides examples of insurance cards for most Marketplace plans as well as other valuable information such as which network each plan utilizes. To learn more about the Marketplace, go to www.hcms.org/Practice-Resources/Payers/Health-Insurance-Marketplace/. If you are interested in learning more about the individual Marketplace, go to www.texmed.org/heydoc/. Source: www.healthcare.gov

Presented by the HCMS Board on Socioeconomics

Quality Corner

Important! Review your Medicare quality and cost data

Beginning in 2015, group practices with 100 or more physicians and physical therapists participating in the Medicare Part B program (Part B Non-QIP) will be compared to their peers. An increase or decrease in their Medicare payments will take place based upon an assessment of quality (Physician Quality Reporting System (PQRS) and cost data (from claims) that were submitted to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2013. This Medicare program is known as the Value Based Payment Modifier (VBPM). In 2016, the adjustment will be made to group practices with 10 or more physicians. Beginning in 2017, the adjustment will be applied to all physicians, based upon data submitted to Medicare in 2015.

As a preview, Medicare made the quality and cost report that will be used to determine upward or downward adjustments to Medicare payments available to all physicians and group practices in September 2014. This initial Quality and Cost Report (QCR) contains data from 2013. For directions on how to download QCR from CMS, visit www.hcms.org/practice-resources/quality/pqr/

HCMS encourages all members to download and review their QCR. Moving forward, the QCR will be available to all physicians and group practices annually during the fall of the previous year. This allows the physician or group practice time to review the data and if necessary file an appeal, before the adjustment takes effect at the beginning of the next year.

To receive email reminders on upcoming deadlines or important developments in physician quality, sign up for HCMS Direct emails by going to www.hcms.org, click on News, then click on HCMS Direct. For answers to your questions, contact quality@hcms.org.

Source: American Medical Association and the CMS

Presented by the HCMS Health Care Quality Committee

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Medicare/Medicaid corner

Medicare/Medicaid dual eligible demonstration project starts March 1

The demonstration project is a partnership between Texas and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to test a new model for providing care to patients enrolled in both programs. In the project, Texas will contract with Medicare and Medicaid managed care plans to coordinate patient care across both programs. Harris County has been chosen as one of the pilot sites for the demonstration project which will be implemented March 1. The state announced that the initiative “will test an innovative payment and service delivery model to improve coordination of services for dual eligibles, enhance quality of care, and reduce costs for both the state and the federal government.” The three managed care HMsIs that are participating are Amerigroup, Molina and United. Patients do have the ability to opt-out of the project.

Approximately 47,000 dual eligibles in Harris County will be fully integrated into a managed care model. Patients must be 21 or older; receive Medicare/Medicaid Dual Eligibility; enroll with a managed care plan that has dual eligibility benefits, and serve a geographic area within the STAR+PLUS program, which serves Medicare patients who have disabilities or get STAR+PLUS Home and Community Based Services. The enrollment process for patients who has already started. Patients in this project will have the option to opt-in or on a monthly basis.

Welcoming in your new HCMS/HAM leaders

Continued from page 1

a Residency Program in Otolaryngology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, a fellowship in facial plastic surgery at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation, and a fellowship in Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Dr. Patt is an active member of the American Medical Association and the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, and serves on the board of the Mid-South Society of Plastic Surgeons. He is certified by the American Board of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery.

Dr. Darrin L. Kates, HAM President said, “We are proud to welcome Dr. Patt into our leadership team.”

Doctor Patt has been named a Top Doctor by the Texas Monthly for 12 consecutive years. He is active in the medical community, and serves as vice-president of the Texas Medical Association and the American Medical Association. In recognition of his leadership in the field of otolaryngology, he was named a recipient of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons’ Excellence in Medicine Award.

Dr. Patt and Dr. Kates will work closely with the new leaders to ensure the continued success of the HAM and HCMS.

Branch meetings

Continued from page 1

Braeburn Country Club (free parking)
Central Branch - Thursday, Feb. 20
Social Calendar - Event - Home Tour
City of Dallas - 6-8:30 p.m. — Social and Business networking with light dinner
La Colombe D’Oro (valent parking included)
North Branch - Tuesday, Feb. 24
Drug and Alcohol Education Initiative
Coas orn Branch - Wednesday, Feb. 6
Compliance Risks in Electronic Medical Record
Speaker: Dan Ballard, JD
6 p.m. - Networking and Social Hour, 7 p.m. - Dinner and Program
Day Oka Country Club (free parking)
Western Branch - Thursday, March 5
Compliance Risks in Electronic Medical Record
Speaker: Diane Adams, ATLM
6 p.m. - Networking and Social Hour;
7 p.m. - Dinner and Program
The Westin Memorial City
Each HCMS member is designated to a branch based on the zip code of his/her primary care provider. To find out which branch designation you are assigned to, check the “List of Branch Designations” in the HCMS/HAM roster. You can change your branch designation at any time, and your membership will be updated immediately.

Medicare corner

Dual-eligible claim submission errors and resolutions in Texas for December 2014

1. EOB 90: Non-covered charges - Resolution: Prior to performing or billing a service, ensure that the service is covered under Medicare. Refer to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Internet Only Manual, 100-02, Chapter 15. Please review the claim to be sure you have the correct payer/contractor.

2. EOB 109: Claim not covered by this payer/contractor - Resolution: This denies the service is that one is that is processed or paid by another contractor. Examples of these types of services are: durable medical equipment; hospice related services; and Medicare Advantage. You must send the claim to the correct payer/contractor.

3. EOB 183: Duplicate claim/service - Resolution: Only one claim may be submitted by an individual for a given service. The claim must be for the same service provided by the same provider to the same beneficiary on the same date of service.

4. EOB 246: This non-payable code is required for reporting only. This code is for informational/reports purposes only.

5. EOB 151: Payment adjustment because the payer deems the information submitted does not support this many services. The number of days or units of service exceeds acceptable maximum. - Resolution: The information provided does not support the need for such many services or items within this period of time.

6. EOB 79: The benefit for this service is included in the payment or allowance for other service or procedure that has already been adjudicated. - Resolution: Please ensure you verify whether or not the service being billed is included into payment for another service, or considered part of a global surgical package, or part of a more comprehensive service already billed.

To check out the zip codes affected in Harris County, go to www.hcms.org/Practice-Resources/TexasDualEligibleProject/

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) will conduct a provider training webinar: HHSC Training on Dual Eligible Demonstration Project. To check out the zip codes affected in Harris County, go to https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/121970873.

www.hcms.org/events/branch-meetings/
Medicare/Medicaid corner
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The enrollment process for patients who has already started. Patients in this program will have the option to opt in on a month by month basis.

Welcoming in your new HCMS/HAM leaders
Continued from page 1

a Residency Program in Otolaryngology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, a Doctor of Medicine in 2000. He joined the Medical Staff at Houston Hermann Southwest Hospital and earned his Masters in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Michigan in 2004.

Dr. Ehrlich has been named a Teaching Physician with Texas Medical Center in 2010. He is an Attending Physician at Texas Children’s Hospital, and a Clinical Professor of Otolaryngology at Texas Medical School. Dr. Ehrlich has served on the Boards of Directors of The Children’s Hospital of San Antonio (2002-present), and Texas Medical School (2012-present). He serves as the Chair of the Texas Section of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, and on the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Foundation.

Dr. Ehrlich has also been named as a Fellow of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, the American Laryngological Association, the American Society of Rhinology, and the American Society of Otologic Medicine. He has been awarded the Distinguished Service Award from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and has been named a Super Doctor for Texas in the field of otolaryngology for the past nine years. The prestigious award is given to leaders in their field who have both been recognized by their peers and the independent research of MMP Communications. He has hospital affiliations with Memorial Hermann, Houston Methodist, Texas Children’s Hospital, and Houston Methodist Hospital in Sugar Land.

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Volunteer to judge Science Engineering Fair

The Harris County Medical Society is calling on physicians, medical students and retired physicians to help judge the 56th Annual Science Engineering Fair of Houston, Saturday, Feb. 28, 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. 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.

HCMS has participated by providing judges for the high school division for many years. The fair is held at the University of Houston Main Campus. For more information and/or to volunteer, contact Scott Atkins at 713-524-4267, ext. 269, or email scott_atkins@hcms.org.

Presented by the HCMS Community Health Improvement & Communications Committee

Participants are needed for D-Tag Tattoo Removal Program

Plastic surgeons and dermatologists are needed to participate in the City of Houston’s D-Tag Tattoo Removal Program, held one Saturday a month from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the Judson W. Robinson Jr. Community Center.

Since 1997, Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) physicians have volunteered to help former gang members and teens participating in Houston’s Operation Gang Together re-enter mainstream society by removing their tattoos.

The D-Tag program has been very successful over the years. These youth can now enter the workforce free and tattoo-free because of the commitment of HCMS doctors. HCMS would like to extend a thank you to all those physicians who have participated in the D-Tag Program in 2014: HCMS D-Tag Chair and Founder Michael V. Kelly II, MD; Melissa A. Bogle, MD; James F. Boynton, MD; Daniel J. Freet, MD; Christopher Livingston, MD; Michael Migden, MD; Roberto Montoya, MD; Ronald Rapini, MD; Steven J. Smith, MD; Charlotte Stelly-Seitz, MD; and Robert B. Freet, MD.

If you would like to join the efforts of these physicians and make a difference in the lives of these young adults, contact Scott Atkins at 713-524-4267, ext. 269, or email scott_atkins@hcms.org.

Presented by the HCMS Community Health Improvement & Communications Committee

Don’t lose your benefits

The Harris County Medical Society/Texas Medical Association (HCMS/TMA) memberships are investments in the medical profession, in patients, in your practice, and in your community. Your membership ensures your continued presence in the Roster, provides access to a free Patient Advocacy Service, provides numerous tools to help you manage your practice, and most importantly HCMS/TMA advocate on your behalf with state legislators, regulators and payers.

If you have not renewed your membership for 2015, please do so right away to avoid interruption of your HCMS and TMA benefits. Use any of the options listed below:

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 at www.texmed.org/join; or

3. Set up an interest-free eight-month payment plan by contacting HCMS at 713-524-4267, ext. 777, or www.regina.payershelp.org. Submit contract by Feb. 13, and pay your dues through eight installments of $95.

For questions, contact HCMS at 713-524-4287. HCMS is here to serve you and relies on your continued support.

In Memoriam

Noam A. Antz, MD, an obstetrician/gynecologist and an adolescent medicine pediatrician, died Nov. 4. She had been a member of HCMS since 1974.

George W. Hetherington, Jr., MD, a dermatologist, died Dec. 18. He had been a member of HCMS since 1968.

Jimmy F. Howell, MD, a thoracic and vascular surgeon, died Dec. 22. He had been a member of HCMS since 1963.

Sheldon W. Joseph, MD, a pediatrician, died Dec. 17. He had been a member of HCMS since 1935.

Marketing on a shoestring budget

Want to develop your patient base and referral network? The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) can help building and enhancing your patient base is not easy. Regardless of whether you are a young physician developing your own or an established physician facing a retiring referral base, it is important to know the tools available that can help you grow your practice. Many physicians assume that marketing is expensive and time consuming. It does not have to be. HCMS can help.

Attend “Marketing 101: HCMS Resources to Develop Your Patient Base,” on Tuesday, Feb. 24, at the HCMS North Branch held at Northgate Country Club. The reception begins at 6 p.m., followed by dinner and the program at 7 p.m. The program is offered for one hour of ethics CME credit. Registration is required. To register, go to www.hcms.org/events/branch-meetings/

Save the Date for the Expo

The HCMS Spring Business Expo will be held on Saturday, April 11, at NRG Center (formerly Reliant Center). Three CMEs as well as a Lunch & Learn will be offered at the Expo. New ethics CME topics provided by TMAT will include: “Avoiding the Complexities of Long-Term Employment Practices: Preventing Discrimination and Harassment” and “Health Care False Claims, Whistleblower and compliance: How to manage your risk.” In addition, a non-CME Lunch & Learn will be offered on “TEXPAC 101: Your Guide to Legislative Engagement.” To register online go to www.hcms.org/events/business-expo/ or call 713-524-4267.

Get the latest - Are you signed up?

The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) can deliver updates on news of interest that you choose directly to your email through HCMS Advantage, our free email newsletter.

If you are interested in learning more about the Marketplace, go to www.texmed.org/healthinsurance.

Quality Corner

Important! Review your Medicare quality and cost data

Beginning in 2015, group practices with 100 or more physicians and physical therapists participating in the Medicare Part B program (Pep and Nonpep) will be required to maintain a list of qualified physicians and refer patients to them. An increase or decrease in their Medicare payments will take place based upon an assessment of quality (Physician Quality Reporting System (PQRS)) and cost data (from claims) that were submitted to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2013. This Medicare program is known as the Value Based Payment Modifier (VBPM). In 2016, the adjustment will be made to group practices with 10 or more physicians. Beginning in 2017, the adjustment will be applied to all physicians, based upon data submitted to Medicare in 2015.

HCMS encourages all members to download and review their QRUR. Moving forward, the QRUR will be available to all physicians and group practices annually during the fall of the previous year. This allows the physician or group practice time to review the data and if necessary, file an appeal, before the adjustment takes effect at the beginning of the next year.

Visit www.cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/Value-Based-Payment-Modifying-System/Value-Based-Payment-Modifying-System.html to obtain the QRUR. A link to the QRUR is located under Quality Measures, Cystic Fibrosis, congenital heart defects, human papillomavirus and hepatitis B vaccination. It can be found under the disease category at the top of the page. The QRUR is also available for review on the CMS website at www.cms.gov/Providers-Partners/CMS-Cooperative-Agreement-Initiatives/Value-Based-Payment-Modifying-System/.

To receive email reminders on upcoming deadlines or important developments in physician quality, sign up for HCMS Direct emails by going to www.hcms.org, click on News, then click on HCMS Direct. For answers to your questions, contact quality@hcms.org.

Source: American Medical Association and the CMS

Presented by the HCMS Health Care Quality Committee

Business of Medicine

Human resource corner – The Marketplace and SHOP

Individual enrollment into the Marketplace

Open enrollment into the 2015 Individual Marketplace will close on Feb. 15, 2015. Individuals may be eligible to enroll into the individual marketplace after Feb. 15, 2015, if any of the following life events occur:

• Have a baby, adopt a child, or place a child for adoption;
• Get married;
• Lose other health coverage;
• Be denied by Medicaid or CHIP;

Failure to obtain essential health care coverage could result in a tax penalty. The penalty in 2015 for not having coverage is calculated one of two ways (whichever is higher):

• 2 percent of yearly household income;
• $325 per person for the year and $162.50 per child under 18.

Enrollment into the SHOP

Enrollment into the Small Business Health Option Program (SHOP) is available to small business owners and their employees. Employees can enroll into the SHOP throughout the year. The program is only available to employers with less than 50 full-time employees.

• Employers could qualify for a two-year tax credit, if they have less than 25 full-time employees who make $50,000 or less per year and the employer pays at least 50% of the premium.

• Employers with less than 10 full-time employees who earn on average less than $25,000 per year are eligible for a higher tax credit. To determine if your business qualifies for the tax credit, please contact your accountant.

Tools for physicians and their staff

The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) has updated the 2015 Marketplace grid. This grid provides examples of insurance cards for most Marketplace plans as well as other valuable information, on which network each plan utilizes. To learn more about the Marketplace, go to www.texmed.org/Practice-Resources/Payers/HealthInsurance-Marketplace.

If you are interested in learning more about the individual Marketplace, go to www.texmed.org/heydoc/.

Source: www.healthcare.gov

Presented by the HCMS Board on Social Communities


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For questions, contact:

quality@hcms.org

Tell your stories and make a difference

As physicians, we know very well that decisions made by lawmakers in Austin and Washington can greatly affect our practice and our patients – sometimes positively and sometimes negatively.

The important thing to remember is that we all have a right and a duty to be a part of the legislative decision making process. In between sessions, we complain about the legislation that was passed. But don’t just complain to the press and to our family and friends. Now is the time for action. We can really make a difference. You hear a lot about making your voice heard, and many think that’s just a cliché. It’s not. It really works.

Recently a physician asked Sen. Joaquin Huffman what we could do to help her during this legislative session. She said, “Come to Austin and tell your stories to me and my colleagues.” As Sen. Huffman urged us, they want to hear from us. They don’t want to make bad decisions that hurt us or our patients because they know they’ll hear about it later from their constituents.

There are several things you can do to get involved. The best is to sign up and attend First Tuesdays at the Capitol. They happen every first Tuesday of the month during the session (Feb. 3, March 3, April 7, and May 5). If you’ve never gone before the process is very simple. HCMS staff makes all the appointments with our local elected officials and provides you with the briefing materials you’ll need. All you need to do is sign up with TMA and show up at the TMA offices on the first Tuesday morning of the month in your white coat and walking shoes. TMA will give you last minute instructions and handouts for the day. Then you will go off in teams with your colleagues to tell your stories and educate our legislators. Go to www.txmedx.com/FirstTuesdays/ to register for one, two or all four of the days.

Sign up for TMA Legislative News Hotline at www.txmedx.com/Profile/Subscriptions/ for the latest in legislative news. Also, watch your emails. There are times during the session when TMA or HCMS will ask you to help by sending emails or calling your legislators’ offices to make a big impact. You won’t be asked often, but when you are, it is because a large physician response is needed.

Finally, stay informed by signing up for HCMS Direct emails on medical legislation (www.hcms.org/news/subscribe_direct/) and continue to read your newsletter and visit the HCMS website, www.hcms.org, for the latest happenings in Austin. We can and will make a difference for medicine and our patients with your participation.

As you can see, many of our top legislative priorities are in response to something other groups are doing which are contrary to our interests. This is why it is so critical that lawmakers hear from you. They don’t understand the business of medicine nor do they understand the clinical implications of many proposals. But that doesn’t mean they don’t care. Most of them do. As Sen. Huffman urged us, they want to hear from us. And they don’t want to make bad decisions that hurt us or our patients because they know they’ll hear about it later from their constituents.

All articles in The Harris County Physician Newsletter that mention HCMS stance on state legislation are defined as “legislative advertising,” according to Tex. Gov’t. Code Ann. §305.027. That language requires disclosure of the name and address of the person who contracts with the publisher to publish legislation advertising in The Harris County Physician Newsletter. Gary Bensinger, Executive Director, 1515 Hermann Drive, Suite 200, Houston, TX 77004, 713-524-4267.

Physician Needed for Clinical Trials

We are currently seeking a TX-licensed Internist (MD, DO) with a demonstrated interest in becoming a full-time as a Clinical Investigator at our Bellaria research clinic for studies in diabetes, hyperension, hyperlipidemia, gastrenterology, immunology, and more. Please call or email jhmmdpa@hotmail.com for more information.

Do You Have a Family Member Graduating from College?

Need a new vehicle for your Graduate?

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This FREE HCMS member benefit is a concierge service available to physicians, staff and family members. You will enjoy the advantage of the special incentives that are offered by manufacturers as credit discounts, targeted leasing and discounted percentage rates. We have rates available as low as 1.6% for new vehicles and additional low rates for pre-owned vehicles. Application for credit approval is online at www.hcms.org/autosubscriptions/auto-program/ where you can complete a “Quick Request” for vehicle from any of our Participating Dealers, along with our online credit application to get the best rate and term.

Call us anytime or day and night, 1-833-7185. We look forward to serving you!
Tell your patients’ stories to the Texas Legislators

The 84th Texas Legislative session promises to be a critical one for Texas medicine and with the unusually high turnover in recent years, there are a lot of members who need to be educated about our issues. You went to Austin a few years ago and proved to be our most effective weapon. Now we need you to come back.

Please mark your calendar for the 2015 First Tuesdays at the Capitol: Feb. 3, March 3, April 7, and May 5.

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Branch meetings offer ethic CMEs, networking and more

Don’t miss a great opportunity to network with colleagues in your area of town at your local HCMS Branch meeting. The branch es cover six geographical areas, allowing physicians to develop collaborative relationships. Upcoming topics include: impact of health reform, Medical Board hot buttons; marketing resources; EHR compliance risks; and dealing with difficult patients.

Upcoming topics include:
- “Hot Button Issues for the Medical Board”
- “What’s Next? Health Care Reform Impact on Physicians’ Practice Economics and Operating Costs”
- “Impact of Health Reform, Medical Board Hot Buttons, Marketing Resources, EHR Compliance Risks, and Dealing with Difficult Patients”
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The upcoming meetings are:
- East Branch - Tuesday, Feb. 3
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