Yet another reason physicians should move to Texas

For many physicians, their local and state medical associations are something to think about whenever the newsletter arrives, or perhaps, only once a year when the dues statement appears in the mail. However, it is important to be diligent of the many medical organizations in Texas employ to protect our profession from myriad forces that will negatively affect medical practice.

Several examples from other states demonstrate the consequences for physicians when medical associations are not so conscientious. The most recent example is the Osteopathic Physicians Organization (OPO) in Maryland, where the governor just signed a bill to allow nurse practitioners to practice independently of a physician. Maryland is now the 21st state in the union to allow independent practice.

In Texas, the House of Delegates (HOD) added collaborative agreements with physicians, the new law allows nurse practitioners to open their own clinics. Perhaps the most shocking aspect of this story is that the Maryland state medical society, known as MedChi, capitulated and did not oppose the final bill.

Last year, Florida became the eighth state to lose its legislatively achieved non-economic damage cap to medical liability judgments. All of these states have had their tort reform laws overturned by the courts. In Texas, we passed a constitutional amendment in 2013 to overturn our tort reforms much more difficult.

In Texas, we can thank the Texas Medical Association (TMA) and our Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) diligently monitor all the activities of the Texas Legislature and the Texas courts and vigorously oppose any measure that violates established TMA policy.

Examples abound of other legislative attempts by non-physicians trying to increase their scope of practice. TMA successfully defeated each attempt, but asked the Governor to veto a seemingly innocuous resolution that contained specific language that could have changed state law with respect to the ability of non-physician mental health professionals to diagnose and treat illness. Fortunately, our TMA has the clout to do that.

We also can thank that many of our colleagues engage in the TMA policy-making process as delegates and alternates to delegate the TMA House of Delegates (HOD). At the last month’s annual meeting, the HOD passed a Harris County resolution that calls for the American Medical Association (AMA) to work with Congress to require real time notification to physicians when patients are within any COBRA grace period. This is an important step toward eliminating this problem.

The TMA delegation to the AMA will take this resolution to the AMA meeting this June. The HOD also voted for TMA to lobby vigorously to prevent the yoke of servitude from government mandates for physicians by repealing compulsory electronic health record requirements.

Over the years, HCMS physicians have written many resolutions that have been the impetus for state and federal laws. Recent examples include the bill of HCMS and TMA that came to fruition that finally eliminated the SGR at the federal level and successfully advocated for increasing funding for GME programs in Austin. Another example is that I must highlight from this legislative session is the successful resurrection of the primary care preceptorship program. Several years ago, this valuable program was cut from the state budget. The next year, concerned HCMS physicians authored and convinced the House of Delegates to pass a resolution instruct TMA to fight back to bring the preceptorship program. In every subsequent legislative session, the preceptorship program was a primary budget request of physicians across the state as they talked to their hometown legislators. This year, lawmakers brought the program back to life with a $3 million line item in the budget.

What sets Texas apart from many other states is our high levels of membership at the state and county levels and the quality of physician participation in policy-making. The legislative process creates a level of respect among legislators that is essential for legislative success. When you see examples, such as the one above from Maryland, it is important to remember that our HCMS and TMA are dedicated to following the policies you establish. We need to be thankful that organizations are no longer able to draw a line in the sand and have the strength and determination to defend it. These examples demonstrate the strength of our organizations is dependent upon us. If we want to continue to enjoy levels of success in both the state and federal legislatures, we must continue to maintain our high levels of membership and our commitment to astute policy making.

Robert L. Towle, MD
President's Page

For Sale - Pediatric Clinic - North West Houston: 10,000+ active patients, fully equipped and staffed, 3,450 sq. ft., 10 exam rooms, large patient registration area and doctor offices. Contact pedclinic@yahoo.com

For Sale - Pediatric Clinic - North East Houston: 3,200+ square feet, 10 Exam Rooms, PM&R physicians planning to sublease 5 Exam Rooms to Pediatrician, Ophthalmologist, Dermatologist, Internal Medicine and/or Pediatrician. Backusive practice. Share Lab, Waiting Area, Reception, Break Room. Off. 288 and Shadow Creek Ranch. Rapidly growing area with 2 new hospitals opening in 2014. Email drmussaj@yahoo.com

PRACTICE FOR SALE – INSIDE THE LOOP
Well established practice, perfect opportunity for a primary care physician with a vision to provide a holistic, integrated medical care, practice cash, no hassles with insurance. Current provider will stay to transition and build on the foundation that has been established. Contact: Dr. B. at 281-372-5505

SEEKING PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN!
Excellent opportunity to practice in Galveston County seeking primary care physicians to join a clinic team of doctors and midlevel providers serving residents of all ages in Galveston County. Family practice training and certification preferred. Excellent work hours and employee benefits. SALARY NEGOTIABLE! Applications and additional information may be found at http://www.galvestontcm.com. Contact: Kay at kr@hcm.org or 409-204-2360.

End Cap medical office space for lease to be shared with dental office in a very busy strip strip center. 2,500 sq. ft. Exam rooms, office, nurses station, and lots of built in cabinets. Established patients from the dental office (twenty years) will help to develop patient pool for the medical office. Call Tim 713-240-8511.

Sugar Land: Medical office available for sublease. Approx. 1,500 square feet with 3 exam rooms, reception, and private physicians office. Fully furnished. Located on Highway 90, with easy access to Highway 6 and US 59. For more information, contact: Petty at 713-858-0120 or phil@fleiswinkel.com

Well established Private Practice is looking for FPMI. Must be Full time. Please Contact: B. at 713-344-7474.

Immediate part-time/Full time openings for OB/GYN PEDIATRICIAN in West Houston/Katy area. Contact: 713-352-4076.

Available now: Aesthetic practice in affluent Houston area. New owners earning $150,000 per year comfortably. Located in beautiful, not far from Houston Galleria. Fantastic opportunity in an office. Your opportunity to protect your future in medicine. Contact: jnmpopa@hotmail.com

New City Office Space for Sublease 2000 sq ft, fully furnished, 2 years beyond break room, Looking for Primary Care/ Specialist to share the beautiful office. Great location for a busy schedule Contact: 713-451-8039.

Mibly Clinic: Occupational Medicine physician netting of $40k. Long established practice for sale. Opportunities for additional income in Occupational Medicine or Family Practice to grow the business. Contact: Dr. G. at 713-353-5110 or ria89004@gmail.com

Premier Medical Spa in the Greater Houston Area with primary emphasis on invasive and non-invasive surgical treatments, laser photofacials, laser hair removal and non-invasive skin tightening. Business has experienced significant growth in the past year. Attractive opportunity for doctors/interns in family practice, plastic surgery or emergency room physicians. Contact Dr. C. at 979-518-2108.
**July Calendar**

Visit the calendar online at [www.hcms.org](http://www.hcms.org)

**Friday 3**
- Independence Day Holiday—HCMS Offices Closed

**Tuesday 14**
- 11:30 a.m., RPO Luncheon, Houston Racquet Club

**2015-2016 HCMS Pictorial Roster is on its way to you!**

Distribution of the 2015-2016 Harris County Medical Society/Houston Academy of Medicine (HCMS/HAM) Pictorial Roster will begin in late June. Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) members will automatically receive one copy as a member benefit. The Roster is full of helpful sections, which include: Physicians listed by specialty and branch designation; Practice Listings for patient referrals; and Advertisers indices for companies that serve physicians (by product category and alphabetical). Extra copies are now available for purchase at the member rate of $33 plus tax and shipping. To place an order, call Nancy Boone at 713-524-4267, ext. 221, or go to [www.hcms.org/practice-resources/pictorial-roster/](http://www.hcms.org/practice-resources/pictorial-roster/) for an order form.

**Marketing 101 – Free ethics CME**

Attend the "Marketing 101: HCMS Resources to Develop Your Patient Base," ethics CME at 6 p.m., Wednesday, July 15, at The John P. McGovern Museum of Health & Medical Science (The Health Museum). This is a free member benefit that will include half an hour of networking as well as companies that can help you with various aspects of your marketing efforts.

The presentation begins at 6:30 p.m. The lecture will offer tools that will fit any budget. A light meal is included, as well as free parking in the HCMS parking garage. Registration is required. To register, go to [www.hcms.org](http://www.hcms.org) and select Events/Other, then click on Marketing 101. Physicians and relevant staff are welcome.

*Presented by HCMS Membership Committee*

**Products and services for your practice online**

Need products or services for your practice? It is easier now to find them on the improved Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) website. Find what you need by using the Buyers Guide, a searchable database of companies dedicated to meeting the personal and professional needs of physicians. Searches can be conducted by product categories from accounting services to web design or by company name. Each listing includes a schematic of the company’s services, a website link and contact information. Many of these companies offer discounts to HCMS members. To access the Buyers Guide, go to [www.hcms.org/practice-resources/buyers-guide/](http://www.hcms.org/practice-resources/buyers-guide/). Neither these companies, nor their products are endorsed by HCMS.

**Get the newsletter by email**

If you are interested in ONLY receiving the emailed newsletter, send an email to scott_atkins@hcms.org. If you would like both print and email issues, sign up for the email issue by going to [www.hcms.org/news/subscribe_direct/](http://www.hcms.org/news/subscribe_direct/).

**Hot Member Benefit**

20% discount on Proactive LifeLock® Identity Theft Protection

Last year, more than 100 Texas Medical Association (TMA) members notified the association someone had stolen their Social Security numbers and attempted to claim their tax refunds. Consequently, TMA negotiated a 20% discount on a service to help protect against identity theft. When LifeLock detects suspicious activity within their network, they notify you before the damage is done. LifeLock detection is different than traditional credit monitoring and offers a comprehensive set of features to protect against identity theft. For more information, go to [www.texmed.org/discount](http://www.texmed.org/discount).

**HCMS Auto Program - 1.65% finance rate**

The HCMS Concierge Auto Program now offers 2006 through 2015 vehicle finance rates as low as 1.65%, with approved credit/credit score 740+, for up to 5 years! New or Used! Insurance rates, if applicable, are not included. The service is available to vehicles purchased at higher interest rates. Submit "online application" and fax a proof-of-title document to 713-526-1344. No fee leases, unlimited mileage and a buyout option for vehicles $500,000 and up.

This is a free member benefit for physicians, their family and staff. Eliminate the hassle of purchasing or leasing an automobile. Call Phil Horneak, program director at 713-843-7185, seven days a week or email phorneak@hcms.org.

**In Memoriam**

Hugo R. Gonzalez, MD, a family medicine practitioner and occupational medicine physician, died May 2. He had been a member of HCMS since 1967.

Rogers O. Whitmire, MD, an obstetrician/gynecologist, died May 1. He had been a member of HCMS since 1975.

Warren J. Williamson, MD, a family medicine practitioner, died May 16. He had been a member of HCMS since 1955.

**Discounted staffing services**

The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) understands that the key to a successful practice is all about the quality, skills and experience of the people in the practice. Rely on HCMS to help you with your staffing needs. HCMS offers discounted direct hire placement of administrative and clinical employees.

Additional resources such as a salary guide for placements made in medical offices in the Greater Houston area are offered free of charge. For additional information, go to [www.hcms.org/practice-resources/staff-your-practice/](http://www.hcms.org/practice-resources/staff-your-practice/) or contact Rhonda Clark at 713-526-7378.

Favorite Healthcare Staffing is the exclusive temp and temp-to-perm staffing provider of HCMS. Favorite Healthcare Staffing offers preferred pricing for HCMS members. For more information go to [www.favstaff.com](http://www.favstaff.com).

**Business of Medicine**

**Fully-insured vs self-insured**

It is very important that you know the difference between fully-insured and self-insured health insurance coverage so that you know which government agency regulates policy rates.

**Fully-insured and self-insured - What’s the difference?**

The Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), is a federal statute that delineates minimum standards for the administration of benefits and is regulated by the Office of Employee Benefit Security Administration within the Department of Labor. Certain health benefits fall under ERISA’s jurisdiction. If the employer is responsible for paying the employees’ health claims and the health plan is only responsible for administering the benefits, then the plan is considered to be “self-insured” and falls under ERISA regulations. Whereas, fully-insured health benefits, where the employer purchases a policy from a health plan and the plan takes the financial risk, falls under the jurisdiction of Texas Department of Insurance (TDI).

**How will you know the difference?**

In the state of Texas, fully-insured health products are mandated to put “TDI” for Texas Department of Insurance or “DOI” for Department of Insurance on the front of the employees health coverage ID card. This identifies that the patient falls under Texas state regulations and laws. If it does or do not, then the patient is under a federal self-insured ERISA plan and does not have to follow Texas prompt payment regulations. For more information about Texas prompt pay laws and self-insured ERISA regulations, go to [www.hcms.org/Practice-Resources/PracticeOperations/ERISA](http://www.hcms.org/Practice-Resources/PracticeOperations/ERISA).

**Practice resources**

**Useful tool - Medicaid Health Plans contact grid**

The Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) has developed and maintains a Medicaid Health Plan contact grid. The grid is designed to help the membership quickly and easily identify the correct contact information, including eligibility, benefits, physician portals, lab, provider representatives, inpatient certifications, disease and case management, imaging, DME, and much more for Houston area Medicaid health plans. The grid is available for download and is located on the HCMS website at [www.hcms.org/Practice-Resources/Grids/](http://www.hcms.org/Practice-Resources/Grids/)

**Learning Corner**

**Free TMLT liability risk assessment**

Do you have Texas Medical Liability Trust (TMLT) coverage? If so, take advantage of TMLT’s free practice review. The practice review is designed to assist you in determining your practice’s risk exposures. A TMLT risk management professional will visit the practice to:

- Tour and assess the practice for patient safety concerns; 
- Review medical records for strengths and weaknesses; 
- Review the practice’s policies and procedures; 
- Meet with physicians to discuss findings and recommendations; and 
- Prepare a recommendation report that requires written response.

Practice reviews are free to all TMLT members and can be completed without disrupting patient appointments. Due to their popularity, reviews are scheduled approximately 90 days from the date of request. Physicians who complete a practice review have the opportunity to earn a five percent premium discount after review recommendations are met. This discount would continue through the expiration of the current policy plus an additional two policy periods.

For more information and to request a practice review, visit the TMLT website at [www.tmlt.org/tmlt/member-benefits/risk-management](http://www.tmlt.org/tmlt/member-benefits/risk-management). Do not wait until a problem occurs. Be proactive in reducing your risk!
PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID
AT HOUSTON, TEXAS

Quality Corner
June 30 deadline for PQRS GPRO
Physicians who would like to report as a group in 2015 must register with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the Group Practice Reporting Option (GPRO) by June 30, 2015.

Any physician group that consists of two or more providers (physicians and physician extenders participating in the Medicare program, Par and Nonpar) and billing under the same tax identification number (TIN) may choose to report under the Physician Quality Reporting System (PQRS) as a group. Group practices also may choose to have each provider report as an individual.

The 2015 PQRS reporting will affect the physician group’s traditional Medicare Part B payments in 2017. Not reporting PQRS in 2015 will result in a 4 percent penalty for groups with two to nine providers and 6 percent penalty for groups with 10 or more providers in 2017. For more detailed instructions on how to register, visit www.cms.gov/practice-resources/quality/PQRS/

To receive email reminders on upcoming deadlines and important developments in physician quality, sign up for HCMS Direct emails by going to www.cms.gov/news/subscribe_direct/

For more information, email quality@hcms.org.

Source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)

HIT Parade
July 1 Meaningful Use exemption deadline
To avoid the 2% Meaningful Use (MU) payment penalty on all 2016 Traditional Medicare Part B payments, physicians can apply or reapply for the annual MU exemption with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) by July 1, if applicable.

To file for an exemption, physicians and practices must show proof of a circumstance beyond their control or outline how the circumstance significantly prevented the physician or practice’s ability to participate in MU.

Physicians meeting one of the criteria listed below will be given an automatic exemption and do not need to apply:

• A newly practicing physician that has never been enrolled in Medicare;
• A hospital-based physician who provides more than 90% of covered professional services in either an inpatient (Place of Service 21) or emergency department (Place of Service 23), and certain observation services using Place of Service 22;
• Physician who has Medicare designated specialties (taxonomy): 05-Anesthesiology, 22-Pathology, 30-Diagnostic Radiology, 36-Nuclear Medicine, 94-Interventional Radiology.

Note: Exemptions are not automatically assessed and physicians must apply for an exemption annually.

For the full list of hardship exemptions and instructions on how to apply, visit www.cms.gov/practice-resources/hit/mu.

See HIT Parade: Electronic prescribing of controlled substances continued on page 5

Tips for preparing for ICD-10
Internal Classification of Disease (ICD) 10 will go into effect on Oct 1, 2015, and will require physicians to provide detailed documentation. It will also require diagnosis codes to be reported to the highest level of specificity. Therefore, it is important for practices to start preparing now.

Below are a few tips to get the practice moving in the right direction:

• Outpatient and office procedure codes are not changing:
  → The transition to ICD-10 for diagnosis coding and inpatient procedure coding does not affect the use of Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) for outpatient and office coding. Your practice will continue to use CPT.
  → Identify your top 20 CPT codes.
  → Take your top 20 revenue making CPT codes and identify their ICD-9 codes and transfer the ICD-9 codes to ICD-10 codes.

See TIPS FOR PREPARING FOR CD-10 continued on page 5

Source: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)

 Hurricane season is here...
If there is an emergency or public health crisis, the Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) needs to be able to reach you by email and fax. For example, after Hurricane Ike, HCMS provided a lot of information on resources available. Similarly, HCMS has provided information on H1N1, requests for volunteers for Hurricane Katrina evacuees, and much more. Please update your email and fax by visiting www.hcms.org/disaster-preparedness

Call Exact Billing Solutions to get answers, NOT ANOTHER TICKET NUMBER. 281-412-2494 or info@exact-billing.com www.exactbillingsolutions.com

People + Knowledge = Results

Exact Billing Solutions: Professional service and results utilizing the best technologies.

The EXACT Billing Solutions difference:
• Our knowledge and experience maximize your revenue stream
• Rules change and we adapt
• We utilize software to GET you the results, we do not rely on the software FOR your results

HIT Parade presented by the HCMS Community Health Improvement & Communications Committee

HCMS Newsletter presented by the HCMS Community Health Improvement & Communications Committee

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