



Lehigh County Medical Society

The mission of the Lehigh County Medical Society is to encourage physicians and healthcare professionals to have the highest moral and ethical standards; to counsel and censure them when necessary; to serve as a strong and united voice for our Lehigh County physicians, our patients and our community; to promote healthful living and well-being and to advance the highest standards of healthcare and service in our region through education, service and advocacy.

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Established 1852

MMXIV No. 2

Mar/Apr 2014

The DR Bulletin

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FROM YOUR 2014 PRESIDENT, Robert D. Barraco, M.D.



Ch-ch-ch-ch Changes: A chorus for Healthcare in our time?

Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes
(Turn and face the stranger)
Ch-ch-Changes

Just gonna have to be a different man
Time may change me
But I can't trace time

Congress summarized the major problems in the US Healthcare system:

1. maldistribution and shortage of health manpower;
2. inequality in health care and inequality in access to health care, including financing;
3. rising costs;
4. too little attention paid to keeping people well;
5. lack of coordination in the health-care system, resulting in waste and duplication.

The date associated with this summary was not 2014, not 2000 but...1971.

One of David Bowie's most well known songs, Changes, (chorus above) came out that same year. So what was happening in healthcare around that time? The cost of hospital care doubled, and health insurance was difficult to afford for many, especially the elderly. There was concern about a shortage of physicians. Specialists began to take over, growing from 55% of physicians in 1960 to 69% by the end of the decade. In response, President Johnson ushers in Medicare and Medicaid. Health Maintenance Organizations were born from prepaid group healthcare plans. There is a call by Nixon for a national health insurance, which was rejected by liberals and labor unions. Most doctors were engaged in private practice paid by a fee-for-service system. Only 12% of doctors were in group practices at the start of the '70s.

So what about now, what about today? (Yes, that is from Daughtry, figured I would keep my musical timeline) The cost of healthcare continues to rise, with US healthcare spending more than double the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average though the rate of growth has slowed. There is concern over a shortage of physicians, 91,500 by 2020 per the Association of American Medical Colleges. Several times in the last 20 years, there has been a call for a universal health insurance, with the call only incompletely answered. Hospitals or their provider groups employ about 70% of physicians in our commonwealth. These "changes" seem to fall short for 40 years of trying.

US Healthcare is almost 20% of the GDP. In real terms, almost 20 cents of every dollar spent in the US goes to healthcare. For that, we are getting fewer physicians, less hospital beds, less

Lehigh County Medical Society, 1620 W Highland St, Allentown, PA 18102-1033
Phone: 610-437-2288 Fax: 610-437-0910 www.lcmedsoc.org

Manuscripts offered for publication and other correspondence should be sent to 1620 W Highland St, Allentown, PA.

The DR Bulletin is published six times a year bi-monthly, beginning in January, by the Lehigh County Medical Society.

The editorial board reserves the right to reject and/or alter submitted material before publication. All manuscripts and letters should be typed double-spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" stationary.

The opinions expressed in these pages are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the Lehigh County Medical Society.

The ad material is for the information and consideration of the reader. It does not necessarily represent an endorsement or recommendation by the Lehigh County Medical Society.

Preserve Your County Medical Society - The Grassroots of Organized Medicine

psychiatric beds and lower life expectancy compared to the OECD average. Though we have the best cancer research and treatment, we have the highest number of obese adults and second highest number of obese children. We also have higher admission rates for asthma and COPD. We have over double the CT scanners and MRIs compared to the OECD average and do double the tests.

The Affordable Care Act is the latest in the attempts at US Healthcare reform. The prior attempt during the Clinton administration, the Health Security Act, failed to gain enough Congressional support for a variety of reasons. Some thought it was a better plan than the current one. Regardless of what happens with this plan, one thing is for certain; Healthcare reform is needed in our country. The reason it keeps coming up is that we have never done what is necessary to change it. Market forces could not provide the changes we needed or the spending reductions necessary. There was too much regulation via Medicare and other insurers. Medical care was no longer an open market.

Change is inevitable in this life. Time does not stop, we can't freeze it, turn it back or bottle it (Jim Croce). Dr. Who's Tardis does not yet exist. We must face change and embrace it; we can't stand still. But we can be a part of change, to have a say in what happens to our profession and not have it done to us. Get involved with organizations like PA Med, Lehigh County Medical Society on a local or regional level. The major national organizations have advocacy committees, groups or summits. If done correctly, such change would benefit our profession, our community and our patients. And David Bowie would be proud...

Encyclopedia.com
<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/health-costs-how-the-us-compares-with-other-countries/>
https://www.aamc.org/advocacy/campaigns_and_coalitions/fixdocshortage/

ATTENTION Lehigh County Medical Society MEMBERS

Does your Physician Group have a Website?

Contact the Lehigh County Medical Society
and have your Website linked onto the
Lehigh County Medical Society Website.

www.lcmedsoc.org
Call: 610-437-2288

NOTE

Members of the
Lehigh County Medical Society can now view the
membership roster (Physician Directory) at our
website: www.lcmedsoc.org or request a Member-
ship Roster by calling the Lehigh County Medical
Society at: 610-437-2288.

How to Verify Your Patients' New Federal Insurance Coverage

You may very well get patients in your office who tell you they've signed up for coverage with the federal health insurance marketplace, but don't have any insurance card. What do you do?

To verify their coverage, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recommends that you call their plan's customer service line. A list of all plans and their customer service numbers can be found below.

If you can't find the number, call the Marketplace Call Center at 1-800-318-2596.

CMS also recommends that you remind your patients to keep all of their paperwork and receipts from all of their doctor's appointments and from the pharmacy. Patients should carry their card at all times.

If the patient is uninsured, they have until March 31 to sign up for non-employer based coverage at HealthCare.gov.

Medication Collection Boxes Installed in 10 Police Departments in Lehigh County

Lehigh County residents who have expired and unused over-the-counter and prescription medications will be able to discard those medications in permanent collection boxes that have been installed in 10 police departments in Lehigh County. The boxes, which usually cost \$500 and are similar to mail boxes, have been delivered to the 10 Lehigh County police departments who applied for them through a grant program made possible by a partnership between the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association (PDAA), the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) as part of Gov. Tom Corbett's Healthy PA Initiative.

PAMED Pledges Strong Support for Medicare Payment Reform Bill

The Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED), along with the American Medical Association (AMA) and numerous other medical organizations, signed on to a Feb. 10 letter to Congress that strongly supports the SGR Repeal and Medicare Provider Payment Modernization Action of 2014 (H.R. 4015/S. 2000)

PAMED urges physicians to contact their members of Congress to advocate for permanent repeal of the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula, to stop drastic Medicare cuts, and protect access to care.

The letter to Congress urges, "Now, Congress is closer than it has ever been to enacting fiscally-prudent legislation that would repeal Medicare's flawed SGR formula. It is critically important to build on this work and maintain the momentum."

As agreement on the bipartisan, bicameral bill was announced on Feb. 6, 2014, PAMED President Bruce MacLeod, MD, said in a statement, "For physicians, the apparent agreement not only repeals the broken SGR formula, but also provides stability and five years of payment updates. SGR would be replaced with a system focused on quality, value, and accountability. The legislation would also provide incentives to

move to alternative payment models, including patient-centered medical homes.”

The legislation includes important improvements over current law that would provide enhancements in health care delivery, including repeal of Medicare’s flawed SGR formula, positive annual updates to Medicare rates, quality standards developed by physicians, and a pathway to new models of health care delivery and payment.

It also includes a 0.5 percent payment update for physicians for five years before transitioning to an alternative payment model structure. The new SGR payment system in this deal is expected to cost about \$126 billion over 10 years.

The letter to Congress pointed out that so far, Congress has spent \$153.7 billion over 12 years on SGR patches, far more than the cost of a permanent fix, and short-term remedies are no longer acceptable.

Bill Banning Sale of E-Cigarettes to Minors Poised for Senate Vote

Electronic cigarettes should have the same safeguards as tobacco cigarettes, such as banning sales to minors, say Pennsylvania physicians.

Senate Bill 1055, a bill poised for a vote in the state Senate, would do just that. Ask your legislators to help protect the health of Pennsylvania’s youth by voting yes when SB 1055 comes up for a vote in their chamber.

This proposed legislation, supported by the Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED), is in line with policy adopted at the Society’s 2013 annual meeting to urge the state legislature to pass laws treating electronic cigarettes the same as tobacco cigarettes.

“Electronic cigarettes mimic smoking tobacco cigarettes and deliver nicotine to the body,” said Bruce MacLeod, MD, president of PAMED.

The Pittsburgh emergency physician also said that “there are a lot of unknowns about electronic cigarettes, and until more facts are known, they should not be treated any differently from traditional cigarettes.”

Volunteer Helped Wanted

Dr. H. Thompson Dale, past president of NCMS, has been volunteering his medical assistance at the New Bethany Free Clinic in Allentown on Saturday’s. The Clinic is in need of physicians to help diagnose and treat the 800 patients that they currently assist.

The free clinic at New Bethany Church, 244 North Sixth Street, Allentown, PA was started in 2006 by Pastor Gus AL Khal. The health clinic is administered by Carol Kleintaub, RN and sees approximately 200 patients per month. Carol has been able to get additional services for many of these patients at low or no cost and ensures proper follow-up with as much continuity as possible.

There is a need for physicians of all specialties at this clinic. There are several specialists who currently donate their time and many of the patients are triaged so that individual specialists who donate their services are practicing their specialty. The clinic currently operates every Thursday and Saturday morning.

The church along with the free clinic provide much needed, strong community support for center city Allentown and additional physician help would be greatly appreciated.

If you would be willing to donate some of your time volunteering to help those less fortunate than ourselves please contact Carol Kleintaub, RN at 610-434-4090

Lehigh County Medical Society Welcomes the following New Members

Nicholas J. Avallone, MD (ORS)
801 Ostrum St.
Bethlehem, PA 18015

Denise DiCicco, DO (AN)
4319 Westbury Dr.
Center Valley, PA 18034

REMEMBER

If you change your business or home address and/or phone or fax number, please notify the Lehigh County Medical Society. Call: 610-437-2288

National Report Card Shows Need for Psychiatric Bed Reporting System

A shortage of psychiatric beds across the state was cited as a key concern in the American College of Emergency Physicians’ National Report Card on Emergency Care issued on Jan. 16, 2014, in which Pennsylvania received a C+.

This issue is also of great concern to Pennsylvania physicians, who voted at the Pennsylvania Medical Society’s (PAMED) annual House of Delegates meeting in October 2013 to endorse the development of a voluntary shared bed tracking system for behavioral health and detoxification.

The demand for behavioral health services on an acute basis has been skyrocketing at the same time as funding for community resources such as long-term behavioral health facilities has been shrinking,” said Bruce MacLeod, MD, president of PAMED.

“Quite often, psychiatric patients experiencing a health problem will end up in the emergency department,” said Dr. MacLeod in a recent news release. “It is not unusual for a psychiatric patient to spend hours in the emergency department.”

The Pittsburgh emergency physician also said that “if a tracking system could be developed to let us know where beds are available, then we could get these patients to the right treatment environment in a timely, patient-focused manner.”

This issue was brought to PAMED’s attention by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American College of Emergency Medicine and the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society.

PAMED is encouraging key stakeholders in Pennsylvania, including the state Department of Health and the Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania, to work together to develop a real-time voluntary reporting system of available psychiatric and substance abuse beds by region.

Mark Your Calendar!

The Annual Social for 2014 will be held on April 12th this year the Social will be held at: Cosmopolitan Restaurant
22 North 6th St, Allentown

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The vision of the Lehigh County Medical Society is to be a relevant and influential leader in the Pennsylvania Medical Society; to unite our physicians and to empower them to deliver compassionate, ethical and evidence based healthcare of the highest quality and value to our community.

The Lehigh County Medical Society will accomplish its mission and its vision by the following:

Legislative Advocacy within our State Medical Society and our Government
Community Education within the Public Health Arena
Member Education, Collaborative Relationships and Collegiality
Service Activities for our members and our community

SUPPORTING ADVERTISERS

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