



# 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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### FROM YOUR 2015 PRESIDENT, Robert D. Barraco, M.D.



#### Is Pennsylvania Ready for Telemedicine Expansion?

by: Chuck Moran, Pennsylvania Medical Society

While national trends are pushing adoption of telemedicine across the country and patient demand is growing, barriers including lack of standards of care, insurance payment, and patient trust levels may be slowing progress in Pennsylvania.

“Pennsylvania has the technology and the clinical expertise to be a leader in telemedicine,” says Karen Rizzo MD, president of the Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED) and a practicing otolaryngologist (ENT) from Lancaster. “We just don’t have the right state insurance laws and the public just hasn’t had a chance to experience it. We need to do a better job of educating politicians and the public.”

Telemedicine, according to Dennis Olmstead, chief strategy officer & medical econ-

omist at PAMED, as it pertains to the delivery of health care services, means the practice, by a duly licensed physician or other health care provider acting within the scope of such provider’s practice, of health delivery, diagnosis, consultation, treatment, or transfer of medical data by means of audio, video, or data communications which are used during a medical visit with a patient.

Technology often used in telemedicine includes two-way video, wearable devices, smart phones, and wireless tools. It can be used for specialist referral services and consultations, remote patient monitoring, and consumer health education.

“The full use of telemedicine is part of the answer to helping thousands of Pennsylvanians living in areas of the state that are considered medically underserved,” says G. Alan Yeasted, M.D., FACP, president of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American College of Physicians and a practicing internal medicine specialist in Pittsburgh. “But as we can see from the September 2014 American Telemedicine Association report card and the March 2015 Pennsylvania Patient Poll, we have plenty of work to get done here.”

The most glaring problem for Pennsylvania identified in an American Telemedicine Association report card deals with private health insurance for which the state received an “F.” Pennsylvania has no telemedicine parity law. In other words, insurance companies do not treat telemedicine as an equal service to in-person services. Specifically, insurance coverage for telemedicine services is not available or barely exists, and thus discourages providers and patients from using the technology.

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

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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.

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Not helping matters are the grades for parity that Medicaid and the State Employee Health Plan received – C and F respectively.

“When you think of a rural community that lacks specialties like psychiatry, dermatology, and cardiology, the use of telemedicine could be quite valuable,” says Robert Elden Wilson, MD, PhD, of the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Society. “But since telemedicine isn’t treated the same as an in-person physician visit from an insurance perspective, there’s little coverage and patients could face out-of-pocket expenses which may not be affordable.”

However, Dr. Wilson, a child and adolescent psychiatrist practicing in Erie, adds that telepsychiatry – telemedicine specific for psychiatry – is beginning to be used to provide psychiatric management in rural parts of the state where it is difficult to secure adequate in-person psychiatric time. “While some patients were somewhat skeptical at first, they generally found the interaction with the telepsychiatrist beneficial and their comfort level with the process quickly increased” Dr. Wilson says. “Treatment results have been as good as traditionally delivered care.”

But, overall public understanding of telemedicine is a factor that could also be slowing down telemedicine adoption in Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Patient Poll, conducted March 6 through 12 by Susquehanna Polling and commissioned by PAMED suggests that patients view in-person appointments with physicians as more important than using telecommunications opportunities. When asked how important it is to see a doctor in person as opposed to seeing a doctor through telemedicine, Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly say in-person meetings are either very important or somewhat important. Only six percent indicated they are not important.

But, 50 percent indicated that they would use video conferencing from the comfort of their home to see a doctor, and 49 percent said they would trust a diagnosis delivered by video conferencing. These statistics suggest that about half of Pennsylvanians are willing to try it. In addition 58 percent say they likely would use email or the Internet to consult with their physician.

“Once Pennsylvanian’s have a chance to experience telemedicine and understand its value, I imagine more would be willing to use telemedicine as the word spreads,” says PAMED’s Dr. Rizzo. “Barriers like insurance coverage are holding up opportunities for Pennsylvania patients to fully engage and experience telemedicine.”

This is unfortunate, says Srinivas Murali, MD, FACC, president of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American College of Cardiology. Already, he says there are nearly 1 million Americans currently using remote cardiac monitors, and nationally there are about 200 telemedicine networks and 3,500 service sites assisting patients with numerous health conditions including chronic diseases.

“There’s plenty of peer-reviewed research that shows the cost effectiveness of telemedicine in addition to scientific studies indicating the use of telemedicine has resulted in improved care,” says Dr. Murali, who practices in Pittsburgh. “Pennsylvanians particularly those with chronic diseases

would benefit from increased use of telemedicine, but first state insurance laws need to be changed to give residents and health care teams a chance to try it.”

According to PAMED’s Olmstead, a telehealth task force, consisting of a variety of medical specialists from throughout the state, has been convened by the medical society to push for standards in licensure, telemedicine practice principles, and payment parity in the Keystone State.

Chairing the task force is Marilyn Heine, MD, a hematology oncology specialist from Bucks County and a past president of the organization.

“There’s interest among Pennsylvania physicians to advance telemedicine use in our state in ways to best serve out patients,” says Dr. Heine, who represents the Pennsylvania Society of Oncology and Hematology on the task force. “Legislatively, laws need to be updated so that our residents can safely enjoy the benefits of this technology like patients in many other states.” Article from pamedsoc.org

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### **Draft Universal Patient Transfer Form and Guidelines Developed by PAMED and Other Stakeholders**

On July 16, 2015, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a proposed rule titled Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Reform of Requirements for Long Term Care Facilities. Among many initiatives in this more than 400 page rule is a discussion about Transitions of Care.

The discussion in this section of the rule coincides with an existing project of the Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED) and Philadelphia County Medical Society (PCMS) to develop a Universal Patient Transfer form as envisioned by Resolution 14-405, which was adopted by the 2014 House of Delegates.

The proposed rule would require that the transferring facility provide necessary information to the resident’s receiving provider, whether it is an acute care hospital, long-term care hospital, psychiatric facility, another LTC facility, hospice, home health agency, or another community-based provider or practitioner.

PAMED and PCMS, working with our partners The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania and long term care organizations, have developed a draft paper form as well as guidelines that could be used for the transfer of information electronically.

CMS is not looking to require a specific form, format, or methodology for this communication. Instead, it is proposing specific data elements or a set of information that must be communicated during the transfer process. Most if not all of these data elements would be found in the draft paper form we have developed and/or contained in the guidelines for the electronic transfer. We are hopeful that the form we are developing could serve as the standard transfer form to be used in Pennsylvania.

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## Lehigh County Medical Society Education Fund

The Lehigh County Medical Society (LCMS) established an area-of-interest fund at LVCF through a generous donation from Dr. & Mrs. Howard Hudson. The fund provides grants to support the health education programs of the Society, such as the expansion or establishment of Health Careers Clubs at schools in the Allentown School District.

A 2012 grant from the Pennsylvania Medical Society first helped LCMS to partner with Raub Middle School on this effort. LCMS has grown the Health Careers Club program from eight meetings to twenty meetings through the school year. Meetings include hospital tours, CPR training, Cedar Beach fitness walks, and demonstrations from local physicians.

For the 2014-15 school year, the Society was glad to add a Health Careers Club to William Allen High School.

LCMS is not a registered 501(c)(3) public charity, so it was important for the continuation of the Society's health education program to partner with LVCF as a place for donors to give their charitable dollars in support of the program. LVCF provides donors with a tax deduction while ensuring that their dollars are being used in support of the programs for which the donors are so passionate.

Gifts to the Fund can be made by submitting a check, payable to the Lehigh County Medical Society Education Fund, to the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation, 840 W. Hamilton Street, Suite 310, Allentown, PA 18101. Or by going to this website; <http://www.lehighvalleyfoundation.org/giving/existing-funds/Lehigh-County-Medical-Society>  
A PayPal account is not required to make an online gift to the Fund.

### 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](http://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](http://www.lcmedsoc.org) or request a Membership Roster by calling the Lehigh County Medical Society at: 610-437-2288.

## Lehigh County Medical Society Welcomes the following New Members

Marina Aghababayan, MD (FP-RES)  
421 Chew St., Allentown PA 18102

Nachammai Chinnakaruppan, MD (NPM)  
Cedar Crest & I-78 Po Box 689, Allentown PA 18105

Travis C. Dayon, MD (OBG)  
325 W Broad St., Fl. 3, Bethlehem PA 18018

K. Rose Duncan (Med. Stud.)  
3614 W Tilghman St., Allentown PA 18104

Grace Fan, MD (RO),  
801 Ostrum St., Bethlehem, PA 18015

Megan Ryan Gillespie (Med. Stud.)  
181 Logan Dr., Hatfield PA 19440

Nathan Christopher Himes, MD (RNR),  
1255 S Cedar Crest Blvd., Suite 3600  
Allentown, PA 18103

Ather Mansoor, MD (CD)  
Suite 103 451 Chew St., Allentown PA 18102

Alexander Christian Podlaski (Med. Stud.)  
Apt. I 609 Springhouse Rd., Allentown PA 18104

Victoria Frances Psomiadis, MS,  
708 Callowhill Rd., Perkasie, PA 18944

Michael Maher Sidhom, MD (FM-Res),  
Graduate Medical Education,  
1 Guthrie Sq., Sayre, PA 18840

Jessica Mehring Small, DO (IM)  
801 Ostrum St., Bethlehem PA 18015

Jyothi Veera, MD  
5540 Old Mile Hill Rd., Orefield PA 18069

Robert C. Villare, MD (GS-VS),  
559 Mantua Ave., Paulsboro, NJ 08066

### 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

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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

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