



Established 1852

Lehigh County Medical Society

Mission Statement:

The purpose of this society shall be to unite physicians to speak with one voice at the local, state and national level to influence health policy, thereby achieving the highest standard of health care for our community.

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Visit our website at: www.lcmedsoc.org

MMXI No. 3

May/June 2011

The DR Bulletin

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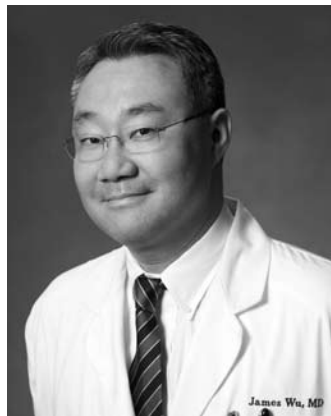
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FROM YOUR 2011 PRESIDENT, James K. Wu, M.D.



In the past year, physicians caring for Medicare patients faced a dreadful fee schedule cut of 21.3% as recommended by the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR). The fee schedule changes were supposed to start in March of last year, and its implementation was delayed multiple times due to congressional intervention. And on December 16, President Obama signed the Medicare and Medicaid Extenders Act of 2010 into law, further delaying the implementation of the SGR until January 1, 2012. This law prevented the decrease in Medicare reimbursements from taking effect on January 1, 2011.

The amount of scheduled decreases in Medicare reimbursement in the next several years is even more concerning. By some estimates, the Medicare physician fees will be cut by 40% around 2016! SGR was created by Congress in 1997, replacing a previous physician fee schedule mechanism called Volume Performance Standard (VPS). The SGR mechanism was meant to control spending for physician's services provided under Medicare Part B. Since 1997, spending per beneficiary on services paid grew by over 65%. This growth in spending is mainly attributed to physician fee increases, volume and intensity of services provided, and growth in enrollment in Part B.

While how the SGR mechanism works is beyond the scope of this article, it is quite obvious that this is not a workable mechanism. On the one hand, the implementation of fee schedule reductions continues to be delayed. This has been the case since 2003. Each time the deadline approaches, it takes intense lobbying and physician phone calls

Continued-

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Phone: 610-437-2288 Fax: 610-437-0910 www.lcmedsoc.org

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.

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.

and emails to their representatives and senators to push back the time frame. On the other hand, physician service volume and complexity of services will continue to grow, especially with expected increase in enrollment from baby boomers, the advancement of new technologies and innovations. The care of a patient, especially a sick patient, is very labor and resource intensive. The reduction in physician payment rates, if implemented, will severely affect Medicare beneficiaries' access to physician services. The reductions of payments will also likely have negative results in medical school enrollment and specialty selection.

The SGR problem, along with other major issues confronting physicians will not be solved in the near term, especially with our current highly polarized electorate and battle-line drawing campaigning politicians. This ultimately requires a non-partisan solution from our government. Concerned physicians need to be educated, and actively involved in this legislative process. We all need to learn more about the federal and local policies, and a better understanding of medical economics. This needs to start at the level of medical school and residency. Practicing physicians need to band together and voice their opinions and participate both in the political and educational process. The LCMS will engage local health networks, medical students and residents to start this process. It is not too late for our members to learn and to get involved. Please ask your colleagues to join our ranks and support the efforts of Lehigh county and Pennsylvania Medical societies.

Allentown School District

VOLUNTEER PHYSICIANS WANTED

Looking for health care providers to serve as volunteer tutors in our College & Career Access Network. Our students will constitute the workforce of the future in the Lehigh Valley. One-on-one tutoring is a highly effective way to increase student achievement. Successful students make healthier life choices. Your membership can lead the way towards revitalizing our community one student at a time. Please contact me at your earliest convenience if you would like more information or to discuss our program further. I look forward to working with you.

Katie Gill, District Tutoring Coordinator

Allentown School District

phone: 484-765-4192

email: gillk@allentownsd.org.

NOTICE

Harold J. Goldfarb, M.D. would like to inform everyone that as of February 8, 2011 he has retired from the practice of Medicine.

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

Physicians strengthen Pennsylvania's economy

Pennsylvania's office-based physicians ensure the health and well-being of their communities.

A recent report by The Lewin Group proves they also strengthen Pennsylvania's economy by creating jobs, purchasing goods and services, supporting wages and benefits, and generating state and local tax revenue.¹ Pennsylvanians benefit directly when the state creates a positive practice environment for physicians. By attracting and keeping physicians in the state, the people of Pennsylvania have better access to health care and a stronger state economy.

Jobs: Office-based physicians support almost 170,000 jobs in Pennsylvania

Output: Office-based physicians contribute \$44.7 billion in economic output or sales revenue, representing 8.1 percent of the total GDP in Pennsylvania

Wages & Benefits: Office-based physicians in Pennsylvania generate more than \$28 billion in wages and benefits

Taxes: Office-based physicians generate almost \$1.9 billion in state and local tax revenue in Pennsylvania

"Our focus is always the better health of Pennsylvania patients, and in the past, other studies like those by the Institute for Good Medicine at PAMED have shown the millions of dollars our members provide in charitable care," said Ralph Schmeltz, MD, president of PAMED. "Now, this new AMA study provides yet another example of the benefits to communities of robust physician practices, specifically jobs and business opportunities for others."

MEDICAL OFFICE SPACE AVAILABLE

Class A Medical Space for lease and/or option to purchase.

Approximately 3000 square feet.
Lansford, Carbon County, PA.

Call: 610-417-5031 for more information.

Lehigh County Medical Society Welcomes the following New Members

Padmanabha Rengahashyam, M.D., (AN)
421 W. Chew St.
Allentown, PA 18102

Fidel Dale Mendres Bautista, M.D., (FM)
1503 N. Cedar Crest Blvd.
Allentown, PA 18104

Lehigh County Discount Prescription Card Program

Lehigh County's NACo Prescription Discount Card is now available online. Residents simply need to go to Caremark's web site at: www.caremark.com/naco to print out their discount prescription card. This new feature gives Lehigh County the opportunity to reach additional consumers. Residents can be assured that information entered to obtain the card is confidential.

Additional cards and literature can be ordered by contacting Kimberly Melusky at 610-782-3096, kimberlymelusky@lehighcounty.org or Karen Collis at: 610-782-3952, karencollis@lehighcounty.org.

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 Membership Roster by calling the Lehigh County Medical Society at: 610-437-2288.

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

LEHIGH COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETY
1620 W. Highland St. Allentown, PA 18102-1033

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