



# 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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The DR Bulletin

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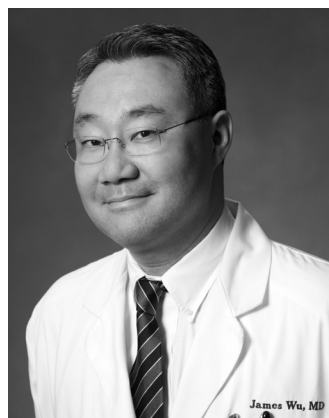
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### FROM YOUR 2011 PRESIDENT, James K. Wu, M.D.



This has been an unusually hot summer with record breaking heat waves across the country. Unfortunately, the weather is not the only unbearable issue this summer. The way our elected officials have handled the debt ceiling crisis this summer has had serious consequences on our country's economy, credibility, and sustainability. For some positive news, however, I would like to report a few changes we have made at the LCMS. These changes were made based on evaluations on how we can better serve our members and community.

We are making steady improvements to our LCMS website. Members and vendors can advertise on our website. Visitors can access the past and present DR articles, and are encouraged to comment on the current DR via our blog page. We will also start to post upcoming social and community activities on the site this fall. Any suggestions or recommendations for our website improvement are welcome.

The Social Committee, currently headed

by Dr. John Manngioncalda, will be setting up activities for physician members in the coming months. The September general membership meeting will be held at the Allentown Bar Association for our annual combined meeting with our attorney colleagues. This event is always well attended. Mr. Scott Chadwick of Pennsylvania Medical Society (PMS) will be speaking on "Finding Common Ground: Areas for Physician/Attorney Collaboration".

The LCMS will also increase efforts to reach out to our state and federal legislators for regular meetings for interested members. This will be organized by Dr. Charles Scagliotti, Dr. Wayne Dubov, LCMS, and PMS. This is a great opportunity to meet and learn about your government representatives, to exchange ideas, and to be involved in the political process. These events will be mailed to all members and also posted on our website.

Lastly, the LCMS would like to revitalize member participation and to add new members for the coming years. Dr. George Arangio, who is the current head of the Membership Committee and the President-Elect of LCMS, will spearhead this effort. We are also looking to stimulate participation from the ranks of residents, medical students, and aspiring college students.

We hope these changes in the LCMS will increase our local medical society identity and to engage more members to participate in education, advocacy, and community involvement. With potential cuts in healthcare spending in the billions of dollars over the next decade, we have our work cut out for us. Physicians need to unite together at the grassroots level to advise and communicate with local and federal legislators. Together we can make a difference for our patients and our community.

Lehigh County Medical Society, 1620 W Highland St., Allentown, PA 18102-1033  
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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.

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## Budget Cuts Affect Medicaid and other Programs; Medical School Funding Cut but Not Eliminated

The \$27.148 billion 2011-12 state budget, signed June 30 by Gov. Tom Corbett, represents a decrease of \$1.1 billion (4 percent) from last year. It contains no new taxes but deep spending cuts to higher education, welfare programs, and economic development, though most cuts are less significant than the governor initially proposed.

With the first on-time state budget in eight years, state spending is reset to near 2008-09 levels.

While Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED) leadership continues to work with the administration to address the budget's long-term implications for physicians and patients, following is a summary of key aspects:

### Department of Education

Many programs in Gov. Corbett's original budget proposal for higher education were to be cut in half or eliminated completely, which would have had a significant impact on the state's academic medical schools.

The good news is that some of these funds have been restored. Payments to academic medical centers that fund the medical schools at Temple, Penn State, and University of Pittsburgh were decreased by 34.4 percent, as opposed to the governor's proposal to eliminate funding completely.

Physician practice plan payments that fund the medical schools at Drexel, Thomas Jefferson, and University of Pennsylvania received a 50 percent cut.

The budget restores \$3 million in state funds for three additional academic medical centers: Commonwealth Medical College in Scranton, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, and Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine.

### Department of Health

Grants and subsidies for organ donation awareness have been eliminated and funding for diabetes programs saw a decrease of 47.4 percent. Grants and subsidies for patient-centered medical home initiatives and other projects saw an appropriation decrease of 2.9 percent. Other decreases include maternal and child health (a decrease of 63.5 percent) and regional poison control centers (a decrease of 27 percent).

### Department of Public Welfare

The Department of Public Welfare (DPW) saw a slight decrease of .5 percent in total funding. The budget cuts hospital payments for obstetric and neonatal services, burn centers, critical access hospitals, trauma centers, and uncompensated care, reducing state funds by \$12 million from the funds available in 2010-11.

Funds for mental health services increased slightly by 3.1 percent, raising the final budget to almost \$717 million.

The budget gives DPW discretionary authority to move monies around with appropriations so added cuts may occur. The state's welfare code gave DPW expanded authority to make these changes for one year. PAMED will be meeting with department officials to help determine how that will be implemented.

One of the largest cost-containment reforms involves Medical Assistance (MA). In 2011-12, the MA program will provide health care and long-term care services to more than 2.2 million Pennsylvanians, a 4.5 percent increase over the prior year, while making changes to expenditures within the appropriations.

### Department of Insurance

One of the biggest changes for the Insurance Department is the expiration of adult Basic that forced approximately 42,000 people to either pay more for coverage, or become uninsured. The Children's Health Insurance Administration will see the redirection of shared information technology contracts previously funded in the adult health insurance administration appropriation.

Funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) remains at approximately \$97 million. CHIP is projected to serve an average of 201,000 uninsured children in 2011-12.

### Executive Offices

Three executive offices that affect health care are impacted by the budget. The Office of Health Care Reform has been eliminated. The Pennsylvania Health Information Exchange saw a decrease of 10 percent and chronic care management has been redirected to the Department of Health.

### Other Programs and Initiatives

The Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4) will see a slight decrease of approximately 1 percent.

The Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) also remains at existing levels of \$1.68 million.

Questions on the 2011-12 commonwealth budget should be directed to [Amy Green](#), associate director of governmental affairs at PAMED.

## Governor Signs Fair Share Act Modifying Pennsylvania's Joint and Several Liability Law

A much needed liability reform bill, which the Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED) strongly supports, was signed into law by Gov. Tom Corbett on June 28, 2011. The Fair Share Act (Senate Bill 1131) modifies Pennsylvania's joint and several liability law so that each responsible defendant only has to pay their share as long as the jury finds them less than 60 percent at fault.

If a defendant is found more than 60 percent at fault, they can be made to pay 100 percent of the damages if the other defendants are without sufficient funds.

Before this bill was passed, Pennsylvania was one of only a handful of states that had complete joint and several liability. PAMED applauds both the House of Representatives and the Senate for their passage of this important legislation.

Some exceptions for full joint and several liability still exist, including intentional misrepresentation, hazardous torts, hazardous substances released or threatened to be released, and liquor code violations.

## Bill to Incorporate HIV Testing into Routine Medical Care Becomes Law

Legislation that incorporates HIV testing into routine medical care was signed into law by Gov. Tom Corbett on July 7, 2011.

SB 260, introduced by Sen. Ted Erickson (R-Delaware), will update state law so it is consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 should be tested for HIV as part of routine care. Although the CDC updated its guidelines in 2006, Pennsylvania law still requires a separate signed consent for HIV testing in conjunction with pre- and post-test counseling. Written "opt out" consent will still be required for those individuals who do not wish to be tested for HIV. Those who do not oppose HIV screening as part of their routine care will no longer be required to sign a consent for such screening, nor will the physician be required to provide pre-test counseling.

This legislation is all about early detection, education, and treatment. Of course, it is also about stopping the spread of a communicable and treatable disease. In fact, according to the CDC, perinatal transmissions account for 91 percent of all AIDS cases among children in the United States. Antiretroviral therapy during pregnancy can reduce the transmission rate to 2 percent or less. The transmission rate is 25 percent without treatment SB 260 previously passed the House on June 29, 2011, by a vote of 177-24 It was unanimously passed by the Senate in April and received a concurrence vote on a House-added amendment in the Senate on June 30, 2011.

The Pennsylvania Medical Society has long supported this legislation and applauds the representatives and senators who voted in favor of this bill.

### Physician Apologies: Thank your representative and contact your senator

When a poor outcome occurs, patients want answers, and physicians want to provide their patients with those answers.

A bill to finally allow that to happen without liability to the physician needs your state senator's vote. Contact your state senator to urge support for House Bill 495 to address physician apologies.

HB 495 was passed by the state House in March by a 171-27 vote. Please also thank your representative for voting for this bill.

House Bill 495 would allow health care providers and patients to have a full and open conversation after an unforeseen outcome without fear that anything said by the provider would be used against them in a medical liability lawsuit.

HB 495 does not take any legal right away from injured patients or impair their ability to file a personal injury action against a health care provider. *From pamedsoc.*

### Concussion Bill to Address Student-Athletes' Safety Heads to the House

A bill that would provide better monitoring of concussions in Pennsylvania's interscholastic athletes was unanimously approved by the House Education Committee on June 28, 2011. Senate Bill 200, introduced by Sen. Pat Browne (R-Lehigh), now heads to the full House for its consideration. The bill previously passed the Senate by a unanimous vote on June 22, 2011.

SB 200, which the Pennsylvania Medical Society (PAMED) strongly supports, requires any student-athlete who exhibits signs or symptoms of a concussion or head injury to obtain clearance by a licensed or certified medical professional trained in treating concussions before being allowed to resume playing sports.

#### 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  
 email: lcmedsoc@rcn.com

### Lehigh County Medical Society Welcomes the following New Members:

#### Brian Abraham Lefrock, M.D., (AN)

Coordinated Health  
 2775 Schoenersville Rd.  
 Bethlehem, PA 18017

#### Eric Wright Bernstein, M.D., (AN)

Allentown, Anesthesia Assocs, Inc.  
 1245 S. Cedar Crest Blvd., Ste 301  
 Allentown, PA 18103

### The Lehigh Valley Chapter of PAHCOM and Lehigh County Medical Society are

co-sponsoring a two day health care management conference on Thursday, November 3, 2011 and Friday, November 4, 2011 at: The Sands Casino and Resort in Bethlehem, PA

Keynote Speaker will be Scott Carbonara  
 other speakers include  
 Lara Brooks from PAMED  
 George Hlavac, Esq.  
 Shawn Phillips, Esq.  
 D. Scott Jones

For information and to register for the conference please see our website: [www.lcmedsoc.org](http://www.lcmedsoc.org) or contact Cindy Fisher at: 610-360-3719, or [clfisher@rcn.com](mailto:clfisher@rcn.com)

### Calendar of Events

LCMS Board Meeting,  
 Tuesday, Sept. 6th.

General Membership Meeting with Bar Assoc. Lehigh Co.  
 Tuesday, Sept. 13th.

PAMPAC Seminar,  
 Saturday, Sept. 24th.  
 LCMS Board Meeting ,  
 Tuesday, Oct. 4th.

House of Delegates,  
 Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 13th and 14th.

General Membership Meeting with Northampton  
 County Medical Society,  
 Tuesday, Oct. 11th.

#### 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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