

Rhode Island Medical Society Council

Meeting of Monday, December 3, 2012

Meeting Highlights

PA Academy, RIMS sue Health over attestation rule change The Health Department has announced an attenuation of the scope of practice of Physician Assistants. Effective August 7, only physicians' signatures are valid on attestations for patients whose diagnoses qualify them for access to medical marijuana under RI state law; the Department no longer deems signatures of PAs and NPs valid for this purpose.

The new restriction raises questions about the Department's compliance with the Administrative Procedures Act and overreach of its authority. As a practical matter, any restriction on physicians' freedom to delegate can impair work flow in medical offices.

In September, the RI Academy of Physician Assistants filed an ACLU-sponsored lawsuit challenging the Department's authority to restrict PA's scope of practice in this way. The RIAPA invited the Medical Society to join the suit as a co-plaintiff. At its Oct. 1 meeting, the RIMS Council deferred the question of whether to join the lawsuit to the RIMS Executive Committee, pending discussion with the Director of Health. In light of that subsequent discussion, the Executive Committee voted to join the PAs in the lawsuit.

Regulatory advocacy Dr. Adrain's report highlighted the Medical Society's advocacy on behalf of physicians and patients in a variety of regulatory areas. Topics included OHIC's Administrative Simplification Task Force, on which Dr. Adrain serves; the Governor's Health Benefits Advisory Committee, on which Dr. Jones and Dr. Lange serve; RIMS' official comments and criticisms pertaining to the state's new, long-awaited prescription monitoring system; new health insurance "network adequacy standards" proposed by the Department of Health; RIMS' sponsorship of an educational program about updates to CPT, and other matters.

RI Board of Medical Licensure The RI BMLD follows AMA policy in that physicians may not prescribe controlled substances for family members except in an emergency. Some ambiguity has arisen recently as to whether the Board's proscription extends to non-schedule drugs. RIMS will pursue clarification.

Legislative advocacy The Public Laws Committee met on Dec. 5. Specialty societies and other physician and PA constituencies were well represented.

RIMS will again host a reception for newly-elected state legislators. The date is Tuesday, January 15, 2013. Council members are encouraged to attend.

The federal election cycle, SGR and the "fiscal cliff" Dr. Migliori shared scenarios that may play out in Washington over the next three months, as Congressional leaders and the Obama administration seek to avoid disgrace for themselves and disaster for the country. Medicare's SGR formula, Congress' self-inflicted automatic "sequestration" process, and significant changes scheduled for the federal tax code form an explosive combination. Congress may delay sequestration until the end of the first quarter.

The voice of medicine and support for AMPAC and RIMPAC are particularly important at this politically charged juncture. A video produced by AMPAC reviews the 2012 general election from medicine's point of view:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=ptq0zBUub6Q

AMA Interim Meeting of the House of Delegates Dr. Peter A. Hollmann, RI's Alternate Delegate to the AMA and current Chair of the CPT Editorial Board, reported on business conducted last month at the semi-annual meeting of the AMA House.

Brown medical student Ella Damiano reported on the activities of the medical student section of the House. WAMS students continue to be prominent in the national leadership of medical students within the AMA and represent the students in the House.

RIMS' Bicentennial The Society's bicentennial series of public lectures on "Neuroscience and Society" was disrupted by Hurricane Sandy. The neuro-philosopher Patricia Churchland of UC San Diego spoke on Oct. 23 as scheduled, as did Professor John Donoghue of Brown on Nov. 5. However, Steven Pinker of Harvard has been rescheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 13, and Paul Glimcher of NYU for Monday, March 4. The series is a collaboration with the Brown Institute for Brain Science and the Norman Prince Neurosciences Institute.

RIMS and NORCAL The Council voted to amend the agreement between RIMS and the NORCAL Mutual Insurance Company to remove the requirement for exclusivity.

Medicine & Health/Rhode Island RIMS' monthly journal will "go green" as of January 2013 and become an e-journal with more readers, more pages, more color and more variety, all at less cost to RIMS and the environment. Broader circulation will elevate RIMS' and the journal's profile and attract advertising. Dr. Joseph Friedman continues as Editor in Chief, as he has since 1999. As of this month, the journal has a new Managing Editor: Mary Korr.

RIMS' Physician Health Program The Council received a written report summarizing the work of the RIMS Physician Health Program.

It was noted that the physicians and Physician Assistants who serve on this multi-disciplinary RIMS standing committee are members of RIMS, while the dentists and podiatrists are members of their own professional organizations, but not of RIMS.

In contrast, the physicians, dentists, PAs and podiatrists who are under the care of the Program are not necessarily members of any professional association. The RIMS Physician Health Program is a service to the community that is available equally to members and non-members of the five cooperating professional societies (RIMS, RI Society of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, RI Dental Association, RI Podiatric Medical Association and the Rhode Island Academy of Physician Assistants). In addition, the RIMS Physician Health Program mentors the Medical Student Health Council at the Warren Alpert School of Medicine at Brown University.

Recognitions Dr. Jerry Fingerut, Treasurer of RIMS, was honored by the Rhode Island Health Center Association at its annual meeting on October 15. Dr. Fingerut was given the Association's John Chafee Award for leadership in health care.

The Rhode Island Academy of Physician Assistants has bestowed a singular honor upon RIMS' Director of Governmental Affairs and Public Relations: Mr. DeToy is now an Honorary Physician Assistant (PA-H). This distinction recognizes Mr. DeToy's two decades of work in promoting the interests and priorities of medicine in collaboration with RIAPA.