

# Rhode Island Medical Society Council

Meeting of Monday, October 1, 2012

## \*\*\*Meeting Highlights\*\*\*

**Health Benefits Exchange: a victory** In light of discussion at the August meeting of the RIMS Council, the Medical Society sent a letter to Lieutenant Governor Roberts articulating RIMS' objections to the Advisory Committee's choice of a model "Essential Plan." Fifteen medical specialty societies represented on the RIMS Council added their institutional signatures to RIMS' letter. Dr. Elaine Jones (RIMS representative on the state's Health Benefits Exchange Advisory Committee) reported to the Council on October 1 that the Advisory Committee has responded positively to RIMS' August letter and has reversed itself in accordance with RIMS' advice.

**New RI Prescription Monitoring Program** Concern of RIMS and state health authorities regarding the epidemic of abuse of prescription drugs has led to the launch of a secure, on-line tool that enables prescribers and pharmacists to track patients' controlled substance prescription history. Physicians can register online at [www.ripmp.com](http://www.ripmp.com) for access to the database. Physicians can also use the database to obtain their personal prescribing history.

**Physician Assistants** The Director of Health announced in August that signatures of PAs and NPs are no longer valid on attestations for patients whose diagnoses qualify them for access to medical marijuana; effective August 7, only physicians' signatures are deemed valid. The summary manner in which the new restriction was implemented raises questions of compliance with the Administrative Procedures Act and may overreach the Director's authority. As a practical matter, such restrictions on physicians' authority to delegate tasks could impair work flow in medical offices.

The RI Academy of Physician Assistants and some individual nurses are preparing to challenge the Director's authority to restrict their scope of practice in this way through an ACLU-sponsored lawsuit. The RIAPA has invited the Medical Society and the RI Nurses Association to join the suit as co-plaintiffs. The Council was inclined to support RIAPA, but voted to defer the matter to the Executive Committee pending further discussion with the Director.

**New England Council of State Medical Societies** Dr. Adrain addressed the NECSMS in Waltham, MA, on Saturday, September 30. The leadership and executive staff of the six New England state medical societies meet semi-annually to exchange ideas, experiences and insights and to advance common goals. Frustrations and successes in liability reform in the various jurisdictions were a theme, as was the trend toward physician dependence on hospitals and hospital systems.

**Election cycle and the federal budget** Medicare's SGR (the misnamed "Sustainable Growth Rate" formula, which foresees a 27% reduction in Medicare fees paid to doctors starting January 1), automatic "sequestration" and looming changes in the federal tax

code present a daunting set of challenges to the President and the lame duck Congress once the November 6 elections are decided. It is possible that Congress will delay sequestration until the end of the first quarter in order to gain time to design a responsible and politically feasible course of action.

The voice of medicine and support for AMPAC and RIMPAC are particularly important in this politically charged environment. (RIMPAC participates only in races for state offices. AMPAC looks to RIMPAC for advice on Congressional races in Rhode Island. AMPAC's support for Rhode Island Congressional candidates routinely far exceeds the contributions AMPAC receives from Rhode Islanders.)

**Bicentennial** The next events commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Society will be a series of public lectures on the topic "Neuroscience and Society." The series is a project of the RIMS Bicentennial Committee (chaired by Dr. Siedlecki) and was arranged in collaboration with the Brown Institute for Brain Science and the Norman Prince Neurosciences Institute.

- Tues. Oct. 23, 5 p.m. in Metcalf Auditorium: Prof. Patricia Churchland (UC San Diego and the Salk Institute) will speak on *How the Mind makes Morals*. Prof. Churchland is a neuro-philosopher.
- Tues. Oct 30, 5 p.m. in the Salomon Center: Prof. Steven Pinker of Harvard will speak on *The Better Angels of our Nature*. Prof. Pinker is an experimental psychologist.
- Thurs, Nov. 1, 5 p.m. in Metcalf Auditorium: Prof. Paul Glimcher of NYU will speak on *Decisions, Decisions: Understanding the Neural Circuits for Human Choice*. Prof. Glimcher is a neuro-economist.
- Mon., Nov. 5, at the Warren Alpert Medical School (222 Richmond Street): Prof. John Donoghue, Director of the Brown Institute for Brain Science, will speak on *Neurobionics: Restoring and Replacing Lost Brain Functions with Technology*. Prof. Donoghue is a neuro-engineer and an originator of "BrainGate," the neuro-implant system that enables people with neurological impairments to generate computer commands through the activity of their brains and thus interact successfully with their physical environment.

**The Patient-Centered Medical Home** Dr. Thomas Bledsoe offered a slide presentation on the implementation, development and experience to date of Rhode Island's Chronic Care Sustainability Initiative (CSI-RI). CSI is a six year-old, multi-payer effort that "went live" in October 2008 with five primary care practices and now involves thirteen practices. Dr. Bledsoe made his slides available to the Council electronically.

**New opportunities through [www.rimed.org](http://www.rimed.org)** The Council was treated to an online preview of members-only forums and "communities" available through the RIMS homepage. The new functionalities will be rolled out to members later this month.

**2013 RIMS budget** The Council approved a balanced budget for 2013, including a 6% increase in member dues. The dues increase is one of a package of measures RIMS is implementing in response to revenue short-falls from a variety of sources.