

# Rhode Island Medical Society Council

Meeting of Monday, December 5, 2016

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

## BCBSRI policy on Modifier 25 (again)

Present as guests of the Council were:

- BCBSRI vice president for clinical integration Matthew Collins, MD
- BCBSRI network manager Christopher Bush
- BCBSRI provider relations and communications director Gail Carvelli.

The three were invited to follow up on the special October 11 RIMS Council meeting where BCBSRI medical directors discussed modifier 25.

At issue is BCBSRI's policy, effective October 15, 2016, halving payment for problem-oriented E&M services or general ophthalmological codes when submitted with modifier 25 appended on the same date of service by the same physician with a procedure having a 0, 10 or 90-day post-operative period.

RIMS complained about the policy in letters dated September 21 to BCBSRI and to the Health Insurance Commissioner and demanded a 90-day delay in implementation.

RIMS asked BCBSRI for analysis of the impact of the new policy, broken down by medical specialty, and for clarification of the rationale for focusing on modifier 25.

In a 23-slide presentation, Dr. Matt Collins discussed the overall allocation of the premium dollar and the medical expense trends BCBSRI is seeing. He discussed the components of the expense trends (price, utilization, site mix, severity mix), with attention to pharmacy, specialty drugs, imaging, laboratory tests, machine tests, and emergency department diagnoses for adults and children. He closed with a graph and a chart analyzing BCBSRI's "total spend" by specialty.

Council members questioned what might lie behind apparently divergent utilization patterns in Rhode Island compared to the rest of the nation, for example in behavioral health.

Council members turned the discussion back to modifier 25 and expressed continued puzzlement that BCBSRI elected to change coverage rather than perform audits, enforce coding rules or recognize that the CPT coding system already discounts multiple same-day services. Mr. Bush provided insight into the process that led BCBSRI to focus on modifier 25.

## RIMS legislative agenda 2017

The Public Laws Committee will meet on Tuesday evening, December 13 (Michael Migliori, MD, chair; Elaine Jones, MD, vice chair). Medical specialty societies have been invited to send physician representatives to participate in discussion of legislative priorities for the 2017 General Assembly session, which opens January 3.

The Council indicated continued support for joining the new Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, which already offers doctors in 18 other states a voluntary option for expedited licensure in multiple states, a boon to telemedicine and patients in underserved areas.

The Council advised the Public Laws Committee and the Board of Directors against pursuing "preemptive" legislation to address non-existent problems. Any such

effort would be wasteful of political capital, detrimental to RIMS' credibility and more likely to backfire than succeed. In particular, a few RIMS members have suggested that any potential move to link maintenance of certification and medical licensure should be preemptively blocked by passing a new law. RIMS is firmly opposed to any such linkage.

### **Rhode Island Medical Political Action Committee**

The Council elected Dieter Pohl, MD, and re-elected Arnold Herman, MD, to 2-year terms on the Board of RIMPAC.

The Council approved minor amendments to the Bylaws of RIMPAC.

The Board of Directors of RIMPAC will meet December 13 (Michael Silver, MD, president; Elaine Jones, MD, treasurer).

### **Governor Raimondo and Blue Cross President entice physicians to Rhode Island**

The Council viewed short videos of Governor Raimondo and BCBSRI president Kim Keck, each touting her commitment to physicians and extolling Rhode Island as an outstanding place to practice medicine.

RIMS requested the recruitment videos and suggested texts to Raimondo and Keck. BCBSRI funded the project. Links to the videos are in the short email to which this summary is attached. The videos are also accessible to all through [www.rimed.org](http://www.rimed.org).

RIMS members involved in recruiting physicians are welcome to use the videos to support their efforts.

**Patrick Sweeney, MD, PhD, MPH**, Chair of RIMS' CME Committee, will be honored by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education at a special event in Chicago on Wednesday, December 7.

**Senior Physicians Task Force** Dr. Fessler announced her intent to convene a task force to develop a Rhode Island approach to ensuring that physicians retain the knowledge and skills necessary to provide safe and effective care throughout their practice careers.

The effort will build upon the regional conference RIMS convened on September 30 entitled "Senior Physicians: Addressing Age, Ability and Acumen." The conference attracted 131 attendees from Canada to Florida and was made possible by a grant from the Coverys Community Healthcare Foundation.

### **Coming events**

- Thursday, December 8, 5 – 8 p.m RIMS' second annual open house for members, affiliates and guests, 405 Promenade Street, Providence.
- March 7, 2017, *Rhode Island Weight & Wellness Summit*, at the Crowne Plaza, Warwick, led by RIMS and made possible by a grant from the Coverys Community Healthcare Foundation.
- RIMS' annual CME half-day, Saturday, April 22, 2017, at the Warwick Country Club.