

Rhode Island Medical Society Council

Meeting of Monday, December 1, 2014

Meeting Highlights

Advocacy

- The Public Laws Committee will meet December 17, 6:30 p.m., at RIMS' offices. The focus of the meeting will be the new General Assembly session, which convenes January 6, 2015. Senator Christopher Ottiano, MD (R, Bristol and Portsmouth) will address the Committee. Dr. Ottiano is Deputy Minority Leader of the Senate.
As always, membership and participation in the Public Laws Committee are not fixed or limited. In particular, medical specialty societies are urged to send representatives to all Public Laws Committee meetings, particularly if they have issues and ideas that are ripe for legislative attention.
- RIMS President Dr. Peter Karczmar announced that Elaine Jones, MD, RIMS' Immediate Past President, has accepted appointment as Vice Chair of the Public Laws Committee. Dr. Michael E. Migliori is Chair.
- Patient protection Among the legislative initiatives the Public Laws Committee will consider on December 17 are two model bills developed by the Advocacy Resource Center (ARC) of the AMA and state medical societies. These model bills are designed to promote transparency and accountability in the limited networks that third-party payers are spawning. (The model bills are inspired in part by the manner in which UnitedHealthcare trimmed some of its Medicare Advantage physician networks in late 2013 and 2014, a process which disrupted many physician-patient relationships in Rhode Island and a number of other states.)
- RIMS will again hold a reception for newly-elected members of the General Assembly at RIMS' offices on Wednesday, January 14, starting at 5 p.m. A list of the 18 new members of the General Assembly was distributed to the Council. Councilors who happen to be constituents of a new legislator are asked to encourage that legislator to accept RIMS' invitation and to be in attendance themselves on January 14.
- The Council elected Arnold Herman, MD, and Mark Schwager, MD, to 2-year terms on the Board of Directors of the RI Medical Political Action Committee (RIMPAC).
- Dr. Karczmar announced the appointment of Elizabeth Lange, MD, and Josiah Rich, MD, to 2-year terms on the Board of Directors of RIMPAC.
- Network adequacy The Council reviewed documents generated by RIMS and the AMA in support of ongoing work of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC), with participation of the Rhode Island Health Insurance Commissioner (who is currently RIMS Past President Kathleen C. Hittner, MD). The NAIC is developing model legislation for the purpose of promoting transparency and accountability in limited networks.

These documents were commended to the Council's attention as examples, among many others that could be cited, of the constructive interplay and interdependence of state medical societies, national specialty societies, patient advocacy organizations and the American Medical Association.

It was emphasized that the AMA alone commands the resources to generate and organize broad support for such advocacy for physicians' concerns at the national level. (The particular AMA-generated document included in the handbook for this Council meeting was endorsed by 109 organizations, including the Rhode Island Medical Society.)

It was further emphasized that the AMA is diligent, thorough and skilled in routinely providing such leadership on a broad range of timely issues, and that it routinely secures broad support from the rest of organized medicine in the process.

Organizational matters

Governance The Council considered and voted to approve, in concept, a series of changes in the governance of RIMS with the intent of promoting more efficient use of human and financial resources.

Efficiencies would be realized by reapportioning and clarifying the division of labor between the Council and the Executive Committee. It is intended that the changes will improve communication and reduce redundancies.

As part of the proposed changes, the Executive Committee would be reorganized and renamed as the "board of directors" of RIMS. The Council would continue to elect RIMS officers, AMA Delegates, Councilors-at-Large, adjunct Councilors, RIMS Foundation Trustees, RIMS-IBC directors and two RIMPAC directors.

The proposals are among the fruits of the strategic planning effort that was initiated by Dr. Jones early in her presidency (2013-2014), an effort that has been facilitated by RIMS Past President Yul D. Ejnes, MD, since December 2013.

The Council will revisit the governance proposals in greater detail at its February 2015 meeting.

Budget The Council approved a budget for the Society for 2015. (In October the Council approved 2015 membership dues levels with no change from 2014.)