

CALIFORNIA CHAPTERS OF ACP
HEALTH AND PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE
February 18, 2009

Participants: Molly Cooke, MD, FACP
Chester Choi, MD, MACP
Faith Fitzgerald, MD, MACP
George Meyer, MD, FACP
Maher Roman, MD, FACP
George Sarka, MD, FACP
Susan Sprau, MD, FACP
Melvyn Sterling, MD, MACP
Jerry Tilles, MD, MACP
Tom Riley
Natalie Kaczur, Staff

Agenda

Coming Events
Resolutions
Prop P
Cognitive Coalition Members
State Update
GPCI (time dependent)
Other Business
Next Meetings

Minutes

The minutes of the January 21, 2008 meeting were approved by consensus.

New Events

- ***Washington Leadership Day – May 19-20, 2008*** – Dr. Tilles stated that as in the past, ACP representatives will be visiting every member of the California delegation while in Washington. Dr. Tilles will need the names of the delegates from each California Region who plan on going to Washington. There was discussion on whether or not to send a letter to the California membership inviting them to participate in Washington Leadership Day at their own expense. Dr. Meyer stated that he did not have a problem with such a letter and indicated that he already has two to four physicians from his region who are planning on attending. Dr. Sarka agreed with Dr. Meyer and restated the caveat that those “extra” attendees pay their own way. Dr. Sarka said that Dr. Sterling will be attending from Region 2 and that he may possibly attend as well. Dr. Cooke raised the issue of not having enough people to cover all of the Northern California districts and agreed to opening the invitation to all California members. Dr. Tilles added that in addition to paying their way, those attendees should be expected to attend the orientation on May 19th. It is important to establish a deadline for members to respond to this invitation, preferably about a month before the deadline established to submit the names of the delegates to ACP National.

- ***Sacramento Leadership day*** – March 10-11, 2009. Dr. Tilles thanked the committee for the work they put into developing the message to be delivered to the legislators. He asked the committee for their input on how many items to discuss with the legislators, keeping their attention span in mind. He stressed that the message should reflect the highest priorities. Dr. Tilles opened up discussion among all committee members. The priorities included: 1) Universal access; 2) the primary care deficit (how to help medical students choose primary care as their career path and assist them with student loan repayment); 3) Information technology – however this may be too difficult to focus attention on at this point. Dr. Fitzgerald said that the problem with primary care recruitment is that external agencies are basically controlling the time physicians can spend with their patients and that internists should be the determining agent. Dr. Sterling commented that the balanced billing issue is something to be focused on since a large part of ACP physicians are sub-specialists and could be impacted financially. He added that a more important issue is access to good care and increased physician time with the patient. Additionally, it is not just money driving students out of internal medicine; it is the parameters of what internal medicine does. Mr. Riley said that addressing three topics should be the limit and we should have bill positions to support the three. He said that a third topic could be “how to turn the ship around to improve our workforce.” Dr. Tilles said we could circulate a letter to each committee member and have them return their confirmation or suggestions and then send a final draft. (The committee accepted Dr. Sprau’s wording change to the initial letter written by Dr. Sarka).

Dr. Roman discussed the handout he prepared two years ago summarizing the ACP. He said that a portion of it would need to be updated and Dr. Tilles asked Dr. Roman if he would be willing to update the summary and circulate it to the HPPC. Dr. Roman agreed to do so.

Dr. Tilles requested that the Governor or representative for each region inform Dr. Tilles regarding the Associates and/or medical students attending and whether they will be meeting with their legislators on their own or with other delegates. This information is necessary in order for Dr. Tilles to finalize the legislative meeting schedule. Dr. Sprau suggested that an Associate or student who has never participated in Leadership Day go with an experienced physician to one of the meetings and then see their elected officials on their own. Dr. Tilles said that there will be a “training session” prior to the visits which will demonstrate how to interact with liberal and conservative legislators.

- ***State HPPC Networking Session April 22, 2009 in Philadelphia Prior to the National Meeting*** – Drs. Sterling and Sprau have been invited to give presentations.

Resolutions

Advanced Directives – Dr. Tilles opened the meeting up for a brief discussion on this resolution. Dr. Fitzgerald said that many organizations “keep doing it and it still doesn’t work.” However, she applauded Dr. Sterling for drafting the resolution and suggested that the HPPC support it. Dr. Sterling said that there is a bill going forward which allows physicians to have discussions with patients regarding end of life care. Dr. Sprau said that it would be helpful if other California regions can co-sponsor this resolution.

Improving Quality in Healthcare – This resolution was originated by Dr. Sprau and discussed with Dr. Cope. It was reviewed by the Committee.

Dr. Tilles asked the Committee if they wanted to support both resolutions. The HPPC endorsed both and they will be submitted by the regions of their respective originators.

Prop P

Dr. Sprau briefly recapped Proposition P, which will be voted on in early March in Beverly Hills. She said that this is specifically a tax issue related to the City of Beverly Hills whereby it changes the formula used to calculate business license taxes to a tax based upon gross receipts. An ACP physician member asked that this Committee take a public position on opposing this proposition. Both Dr. Littenberg and Dr. Mort Field indicated that it is their feeling that the new formula will result in higher taxes for physicians who have high gross receipts but also high overheads. Drs. Littenberg and Field are asking that the ACP publicly acknowledge that this new formula is disadvantageous and may have a negative impact on physicians being able to practice in that community. LACMA is opposing this proposition. Dr. Meyer feels strongly that if one city approves this new business tax formula, other cities may follow. Dr. Sterling reminded the Committee that one of the goals of the College is advocacy and opposing this proposition on behalf of physicians would support that goal. Dr. Cooke had previously abstained from any opinion on this issue; however she decided to support the opposition of Proposition P. The HPPC unanimously opposed this proposition and Dr. Sprau said that she will inform Dr. Field of the HPPC's position and she will work on a press release. Ms. Kaczur will communicate the HPPC's position to LACMA and the CMA and send a press release to the LA Times.

State Update

Mr. Riley gave a brief update on State issues. He informed the Committee that the assembly and senate reconvened this morning at 12:30 a.m. to work on the California State budget. Able Maldonado will be the key republican vote, but he has held his vote pending the addition of an open primary. Lou Carrea was the key democratic vote and he was offered concessions for approving the budget.

Governor Schwarzenegger announced yesterday that the State will be laying off 20,000 employees which is likely to happen within next week and a half.

Mr. Riley mentioned that he received word from Executive Director of the California Associate of Family Physicians (CAFP sits on task force for PCMH) that the idea of nurses interjecting themselves into the medical home project seems to be coming to fruition. Mr. Riley said that he will locate information on this discussion and will forward it to Ms. Kaczur who will send it to HPPC members. Mr. Riley said that he is working with Assemblyman Dave Jones on a bill to define the PCMH.

Today at 10:00 a.m. in San Francisco a final determination on the refusal to reconsider the MediCal lawsuit will be announced. Mr. Riley said that that will be very important because as of March 1, there would be a 1% increase in the physician MediCal rate and 5% increase to pharmacies.

With regard to timely access, there will be a hearing early next week on these regulations, which impose time restraints on how long a patient has to wait before he/she can see his/her physician. A number of organizations have opposed this regulation. Dr. Sterling asked Mr. Riley to email this regulation to Ms. Kaczur, who will then send it to the HPPC members. Mr. Riley responded that the bill, itself, went through about four or five years ago and that this is the regulation for the law.

Dr. Sprau discussed the vote by the National ACP Board of Regents regarding the Medical Home and the Nurse Practitioner issue. She said that she was informed that four regents were opposed and asked if the HPPC can obtain a roll call vote from the BOR. Dr. Tilles and Ms. Kaczur will attempt to find out which regents were in favor of allowing NPs in the Medical Home. Dr. Fitzgerald said that she could not give out any information on the vote due to confidentiality issues. An emergency resolution can be presented at the Spring BOG meeting regarding this issue. Drs. Sprau, Sterling and Fitzgerald will craft a resolution and send it to Dr. Tilles. Dr. Fitzgerald requested that she obtain the wording used by other specialty groups. Mr. Riley will send a sample of the wording to Ms. Kaczur.

GPCI

A report on the Medicare GPCI was released regarding an analysis that was performed by the Federal Government (by a sub-contracted group in California). The report cited four possible solutions to the GPCI problem. National has considered these proposals, but has not taken a position yet. The GPCI formula was developed in 1994 and has not been updated since then. However many areas originally considered rural are now urbanized, yet Medicare payments have not been adjusted. The CMA has tried to get legislators to change the formula, but has been unsuccessful. Dr. Sprau said that there is an open comment period on the recommendations from the report and the CMA has submitted comments. National ACP has yet to take a position and submit comments and Dr. Sprau asked if the HPPC, on behalf of the California State ACP Chapter, should take a position and submit comments in this open comment period. Dr. Fitzgerald responded affirmatively as this issue affects California practitioners. Dr. Sprau said that a summary of the report can be circulated to the HPPC members and resultant comment could be similar to what the CMA has submitted ‘...we are in favor of improving inequities that currently exist; updates to the GPCI formula and a utilization of a formula equitable to all geographic areas.’ Mr. Riley said that the CAFP is taking a watch position on this and not submitting comments during this open comment period.

Other Business

Dr. Sprau suggested that the meeting date/time of the monthly HPPC conference call meetings be adjusted (possibly quarterly) so that Drs. Speckart and Littenberg can participate. Ms. Kaczur will work with Dr. Tilles on this suggestion.

Future HPPC Meetings

The next HPPC meetings are scheduled for March 25 and April 15 and May 27, 2009.

Adjournment

8:44 a.m.

Prepared by:
Natalie Kaczur

Approved by:
Jeremiah Tilles, MD, MACP, Chair