

Delaware Chapter GOVERNOR'S NEWSLETTER

ACP
AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*

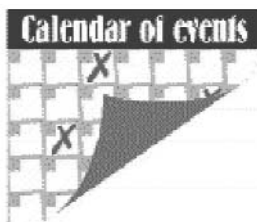
Spring 2003

Virginia U. Collier, MD, FACP
Governor, Delaware Chapter

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTER



Our chapter is thriving both at the state and national level. The February 23rd, 2003 Annual Scientific Meeting was a resounding success, with a record attendance and many commented that it was one of, if not the best, meeting we've had in recent years. Our Fourth Annual Lower Shore Symposium, coming up soon (see below), also continues to attract physicians from all over the state. On the national scene, our DE Chapter Associate abstract competition winner, Sangeeta Bhattacharya, presented her abstract, "An Unusual Combination: Superior Mesenteric Artery Syndrome Associated with Celiac Disease and Small Bowel Cancer", in poster form at the national ACP meeting in San Diego, as did Debbie Zarek, whose abstract was chosen by national judges for presentation as a poster. Both represented the DE Chapter in an exemplary fashion. Sangeeta's poster was one of 10 out of the more than 1000 submitted which was declared a national winner. In addition, Kim Bates, another Associate in our chapter, received the prestigious Joseph E. Johnson Leadership Award. Both were recognized at a ceremony at the end of the meeting, which was attended by College officers, Regents and Governors from throughout the United States. Certainly the DE Associates and I who were there to see Kim and Sangeeta receive their awards could not stop smiling!



LOWER DELAWARE SYMPOSIUM - SAVE THE DATE

The Fourth Annual Lower Delaware Symposium will be held on Saturday, June 7 at Ruddertowne, Dewey Beach. The program will bring nationally known speakers from throughout the United States to talk on topics of general interest to internists. For further information contact Mansour Saberi, MD, FACP at **1-302-645-2244**.

The speakers are as follows:

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|----------|---|
| 8:05AM | Approach to the Management of Decompensated Heart Failure
James A. Hill, MD, MS |
| 9:00 AM | Update on the Identification and Treatment of Lipid/Lipoprotein Abnormalities
Robert Kreisberg, MD |
| 10:30 AM | Abnormal Thyroid Function Test Results in Euthyroid Persons
Robert Utiger, MD |

- 12:35PM Treatment of Anxiety and Depression
Robert H. Howland, MD
- 1:35PM Antibiotic Update
Hans Liu, MD
- 7:00PM Advances in Gastrointestinal Endoscopy
Vinod K. Parasher, MD

INTERNAL MEDICINE MENTORING

I am pleased to report that we have another 5 students from both Jefferson Medical College and PCOM signed up for internal medicine experiences in southern Delaware. Thanks to Drs. Saberi, Jarrell, and Wolfgang for volunteering to be preceptors this year.

ASSOCIATES JOURNAL CLUB

Mansour Saberi will host the Associates Journal Club on May 22 in Wilmington. As usual, ethical or humanistic issues will be discussed.



VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE

The Chapter continues to work on developing a multifaceted volunteer program for associates. Our volunteer committee, led by Diane Coniglio and Tom Hilton and assisted by Neil Farber, has been hard at work. In addition to our first member-associate volunteer activity held last summer at the Wilmington YMCA, we are in the process of developing an international volunteer opportunity for associates. We are gathering together the names of international sites that can serve both as a suitable academic elective experience for the associates as well as offering them an opportunity to be of service to those who are medically underserved. The chapter will solicit applications from associates and will fund 1-2 associates from among the applications submitted. Finally, we hope to develop a booklet, which lists both local and international volunteer opportunities with contact information for all sites mentioned.

WHAT IS THE COLLEGE DOING FOR YOU?

At the last Board of Governors' meeting, Sarah Walker, then president, now immediate past-president of the ACP, distributed the following letter to the Governors. Although the letter was written to a frustrated internist who was considering abandoning the practice of internal medicine for another specialty, it could very well have been addressed to ACP members as a whole. I believe it illustrates succinctly just what the College IS doing for its members, and I can honestly say that the College will continue to address the concerns of its members in the strongest possible fashion going forward. Your membership is worthwhile!



CONFIDENTIAL

February 11, 2003

Richard E. Sacks-Wilner, MD
PO Box 9
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

Dear Doctor Sacks-Wilner:

College staff has brought to my attention your e-mail of January 29 to the Executive Director of the Northern California Chapter of the ACP-ASIM concerning your frustrations with practicing Internal Medicine and your plans to leave your practice and begin a residency in Radiology.

Thank you very much for expressing your problems in such an honest and forthright manner.

I do want to let you know that the governance and staff of ACP-ASIM are also very concerned about the situation facing internists, primary care physicians, and many other specialists in medicine today.

While the ACP-ASIM has not been successful in bringing about solutions to all of the issues you noted, we have engaged in influencing policy-makers on about every issue affecting the practice of medicine.

The problems we are working to correct include:

- We have led the fight, along with the American Medical Association and several other specialty societies, to reverse the disastrous cuts in Medicare payments to physicians. Over the past 14 months, we have devoted more time, effort and money to this issue than any other in the College's history. Although partisan gridlock has repeatedly stalled action in Congress, we have not given up the fight for fair and adequate payment for internists' services. In November, we sent an urgent e-mail to the 43,000 ACP-ASIM members for whom we have valid e-mail addresses, enlisting their help in pressuring Congress to act as the first order of business in January. We developed a Medicare Crisis Action Kit that internists can adapt to make their case to Congress and to seek the support of their patients. You can obtain a copy of the action kit by going www.acponline.org/hpp/medact_kit.htm?hp. Our efforts are paying off: the United States Senate recently passed a bill that would halt, through the remainder of the government's fiscal year, the 4.4% cut in Medicare payments to doctors that otherwise will go into effect on March 1, giving us the time we

need to persuade Congress to enact a permanent solution to the problem. We are now working hard to assure that the House of Representatives passes a comparable bill.

- We helped draft Medicare regulatory relief legislation that passed the House of Representatives twice and that is expected to be re-introduced in the new Congress. The bill would require that Medicare carriers provide you with complete and accurate information, reform the onerous Medicare audit process, and require that the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) develop and test alternatives to onerous documentation requirements for office visits evaluation and management services.
- We have successfully influenced Medicare to modify or eliminate numerous rules that impose "hassles" and "unfunded" mandates on physicians. Over 50 of our recommendations for relief from excessive Medicare rules were incorporated into the final report of a task force appointed by HHS Secretary Thompson to recommend ways to ease Medicare hassles. Secretary Thompson has committed to using the report of the task force as a "scorecard" to judge the agency's effectiveness in making the recommended changes. We intend to hold them accountable to make sure that they do. Some of the changes recommended by ACP-ASIM have already been implemented. For instance, Medicare has cut the paperwork requirements for authorization of diabetic testing supply orders in half.
- We helped persuade Medicare to raise payments for flu shots from \$3.98 to approximately \$7.26 per shot, effective March 1, 2003. Improved reimbursement for vaccinations has been one of the principal goals of the College's landmark Adult Immunization Initiative.
- We have influenced HHS to make changes in the HIPAA rules to reduce the paperwork burden on internists, and we are helping our members by offering them simple tools and guides on HIPAA compliance as a free member benefit through our Practice Management Center (www.acponline.org/pmc). Other medical organizations are charging hundreds of dollars for similar tools and guides.
- Along with other medical organizations, we successfully lobbied the House of Representatives to pass medical liability tort reform, including a \$250,000 cap on non-economic damages and limits on contingency fees. Although the Senate adjourned without taking action on the bill, the bill

will be re-introduced in the new Congress. ACP-ASIM will continue to carry on the fight until meaningful tort reform is enacted at the federal and state level.

- We developed new position papers on Medicare prescription drug coverage, the nursing shortage, and the scope of practice for nurses and pharmacists, among other issues. These position papers, which guide our advocacy activities, are viewed by members of Congress, health policy experts, and the news media as among the most trusted and credible of any physician organization. New position papers are currently under development on the medical liability crisis, racial and ethnic disparities in health care, and payment for e-mail consultations and other electronic services that fall outside of the usual face-to-face encounter. You can find a complete list of our position papers on ACP-ASIM online: www.acponline.org/advocacy.

- We helped persuade CMS to ease documentation requirements for attending physician supervision of residents. The revised language makes it clear that for E/M services, teaching physicians need not repeat documentation already provided by a resident. In addition, the revisions clarify policies for services involving students.

- We also proposed a plan to provide affordable coverage to all Americans through a pluralistic system by the end of the decade. Legislation based on our proposal will be introduced as a Senate bill early in the 108th Congress. It is our bold ambition that the plan will be the basis for a bipartisan agreement in Congress to gradually expand coverage to all Americans, through an expansion of public programs combined with tax credits to purchase private insurance, so that all Americans have coverage by January 1, 2009.

I can appreciate the reality that from your perspective, you may still question how the College can claim that it is effective while the economic and regulatory environment for practicing internists is so tough. But I hope that I have been able to show you that we are aware of these problems and we are doing everything we can to improve things for practicing internists and their patients

Like you, we are disgusted with the failings of so many of our political leaders to address the crisis in medicine. Like you, we are frustrated when the improvements don't occur as quickly as we want.

The one thing we will not do, however, is reduce our commitment to representing internal medicine with the persistence, creativity, and credibility and determination needed to succeed. To do this, though, we need the support of doctors who are in accord with our principles.

I would be happy to talk with you about your concerns, and I can be reached by e-mail at walkers@health.missouri.edu. My cell phone number is 573-864-1588.

With your permission, I would like to take your letter and use your from-the-heart statements when I make my next round of congressional visits on Capital Hill.

Robert B. Doherty, ACP-ASIM Senior Vice President for Governmental Affairs and Public Policy in Washington, DC, is also available. His toll free number is **1-800-338-2746**.

We appreciate your taking the time to write to your chapter about your concerns.

Sincerely,

Sara E. Walker, MD, MACP
ACP-ASIM President

Xc: Edward C. Harris, MD, FACP
ACP-ASIM Governor, Northern California

Kathleen Matikonis
Executive Director ACP, California Chapter

John Tooker, MD, MBA, FACP
Executive Vice President and
Chief Executive Officer

John Mitas, Jr. MD, FACP
Deputy Executive Vice President and
Chief Operating Officer

James M. Ott
Senior Vice President, Membership

Robert B. Doherty
Senior Vice President,
Governmental Affairs and Public Policy

FROM THE COLLEGE TO ITS MEMBERS: END-OF-LIFE CARE PATIENT EDUCATION BROCHURES

The Center for Ethics and Professionalism inaugurated its Patient Education and Caring: End-of-Life (PEACE) Series by releasing a pamphlet for doctors and three educational brochures designed to guide patients through various stages of end-of-life and palliative care. These attractively designed brochures offer clearly worded advice for patients and caregivers and are suitable for distribution in doctor's offices.

For the patient

- When You Have Pain at the End of Life
- Living with a Serious Illness
- Making Medical Decisions for a Loved One at the End of Life

For the doctor

- Improving Your End of Life Care Practice

Each patient **PEACE** brochure is packaged in sets of 50 and is available at no charge.

You can download the brochures from ACPOnline:

(create a link to <http://www.acponline.org/ethics/pated-project.htm>)

or if you would like to order print brochures, please contact:

Caryn Abramowitz at cabramowitz@acponline.org

THE PRACTICE MANAGEMENT CENTER

The **Practice Management Center (PMC)**, located in the Washington office, is a valuable benefit of College membership, providing timely information to succeed in today's health care environment.

PMC's free assistance to members covers the full spectrum of business issues associated with running and working in a medical practice. Included are practical written guides, practice management tools, and personalized advice to help College members improve practice performance. These PMC resources, plus FAQs, comparative data, and access to PMC staff specialists, are available via the "members only" section of PMC's web page, an important member benefit.

All PMC resource materials also are available on a convenient CD entitled "Practice Management Library for Internists: Guides, Tools, and Resources" (Product Number 410400120.) The CD may be ordered from ACP's customer service department at **1-800-523-1546 x. 2600**. (Members pay only \$4 for shipping and handling. The non-member sales price is \$250.)

EMAIL - THE COLLEGE CONNECTION

Help us keep you up-to-date on the latest College news and important happenings in internal medicine! Please take a moment to provide ACP-ASIM with your email address. ACP will not sell or share your e-mail address

—VISIT OUR CHAPTER WEB SITE—

<http://www.acponline.org/chapters/de>