

Georgia Chapter GOVERNOR'S NEWSLETTER

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

Fall 2005

Ruth-Marie E. Fincher, MD, FACP
Governor, Georgia Chapter



GOVERNOR'S CORNER

This issue of the Governor's Newsletter focuses primarily on our upcoming 2006 Chapter meeting and the important activities of the Health and Public Policy Committee. I greatly appreciate **Drs. Walter Moore** and **Jacqueline Fincher** leading these two activities. I hope you will read about them in the newsletter; then, come to the annual chapter meeting March 24-26, 2006 in Savannah and participate in at least one legislative activity this year.

My comments focus on the Fall Board of Governor's meeting, from which I recently returned. The agenda concentrated primarily on the rapid ascent of "Pay for Performance" (P4P). P4P models will be implemented - the remaining questions are when and how the performance will be assessed. Models for P4P are being used for bargaining in national discussions about physician payment reform. The idea is to reimburse more for "good" results, not just visits. National data were quoted indicating that states with more generalist physicians provide more effective care at lower cost than states with a higher proportion of subspecialists.

The primary goal of P4P is to reward quality health care with higher reimbursement, thereby improving care as a result of financial incentives. Three major obstacles were discussed: how to reliably measure quality of care, how to fairly compare practices, and the fact that many practices do not use electronic health records. Even if the first two

issues were addressed adequately, P4P could not be implemented if the practice does not use an electronic health record.

The ACP is very involved in helping to determine what outcomes are appropriate to measure and how practices can be compared fairly. Several pilot projects to assess P4P are already underway nationally. A bill (HR 3617) entitled, the Medicare Value-based Purchasing for Physician Services Act, was introduced in July by **Representative Nancy Johnson** (CT), chair of the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee. This Bill would repeal the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) and tie Medicare payment updates to quality measures reported by physicians rather than to the Gross National Product (GNP). Based on what I heard at the Board of Governor's meeting, it seems clear that Medicare reform will be linked in some way to measurement of performance.

Dr. Jacqueline Fincher's Health and Public Policy column in the newsletter provides additional background regarding this critical issue. As practicing internists and members of the ACP, we should be part of the process of reform. An easy way to contact your legislators to express your views is to go to the ACP website, www.acponline.org and from there to the legislative action corner. Once there, you can point, click, edit, and send letters about health care reform and other health topics to your legislators.

Rhee Fincher, Governor

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

GA Leadership Day at State Capitol
February 9, 2006

2006 GA Chapter ACP meeting
Savannah, GA
March 24-26, 2006

2006 National ACP meeting
Philadelphia, PA
April 6 - 8, 2006

National Leadership Day
Washington, DC
May 17, 2006

2006 National ACP Annual Session
San Diego, CA
April 19-21, 2007

ANNOUNCING THE GA CHAPTER ACP SPRING MEETING
THIS YEAR'S SPRING MEETING WILL FEATURE AN EXCITING
COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BETWEEN
THE GEORGIA CANCER COALITION AND THE ACP GEORGIA CHAPTER
ANNUAL CHAPTER SCIENTIFIC MEETING, MARCH 24-26, 2006

We hope you will join us at the 2006 Georgia Chapter ACP annual meeting! The theme of the meeting is "New Technology and Innovations in Internal Medicine." By popular vote, the meeting will be held again in Savannah March 24-26, 2006 at the completely renovated Hyatt Regency Hotel on the Riverfront. **Walter Moore**, MD, FACP, Professor of Medicine and Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education at the Medical College of Georgia, chair of the Program Planning Committee for the highly successful 2005 chapter meeting, is also chair of the 2006 Scientific Meeting.

Please join us on Friday morning, March 24, 2006 for the first comprehensive presentation by the Georgia Cancer Coalition (GCC) to any state physician's society. The GA ACP Chapter and GCC collaborated to develop a pre-course (4.0 Category 1 CME hours) focused on cancer and designed for practicing internists. **James Repella**, PhD, President, Southeast Georgia Cancer Alliance, **Jim Hotz**, MD, President and CEO, Southwest Georgia Cancer Coalition, Albany, Georgia and **Ms. Nancy Paris**, Vice President of the Georgia Cancer Coalition, played key roles in conceptualizing and developing the program. The "all star" faculty illustrates the expertise and talent that have been gathered together by the GCC to fight cancer in the state of Georgia.

The GCC is a national model for comprehensive cancer control and represents one of the most visionary uses of tobacco settlement dollars in the country. Through GCC investments, Georgia plans to become a national leader in cancer treatment and research over the next decade. Georgia has recruited over 77 of the most distinguished cancer clinicians and researchers to join GCC programs over the past 4 years. The Institute of Medicine reviewed the GCC process and confirmed the immense potential of this innovative approach. The GCC feels it is now time for all Georgia physicians and their patients to be offered an opportunity to participate in the programs of the GCC.

By fulfilling the GCC mission to reduce the number of cancer deaths in the state, Georgia intends to become a national leader in cancer control by accelerating prevention, early detection, treatment and research. All of the Coalition's activities, programs, and budget have been organized around five goals:

- ❖ Prevent cancer and detect existing cancers earlier.
- ❖ Improve access to quality care for all Georgians with cancer.
- ❖ Save more lives in the future.
- ❖ Train future cancer researchers and caregivers.
- ❖ Realize economic benefits from eradicating cancer.

The opening session of the chapter meeting will focus on fundamental principals and concepts related to cancer prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and research and will be presented in a fashion that will help the attendees apply the principles and concepts in their practices. Major research trends and basic science breakthroughs anticipated in the next decade will be highlighted.

This will be a practical, "nuts and bolts" session that will allow direct participant interaction with faculty members. The session is guaranteed to be educational, intellectually stimulating, and presented in an interesting format to update your knowledge in the area of cancer across the spectrum of prevention, early detection, treatment and research.

The four-hour cancer session that opens our meeting is an exciting addition to an excellent scientific program. We are grateful to the GCC for identifying national leaders in cancer control to present the session that promises to be an invaluable educational experience. More information is available at (www.acponline.org/chapters/ga/).

The other sessions of the meeting are an exciting mix of practical clinical updates, health and public policy issues, advocacy, practice management, and the Associates' and students' program. Clinical updates include stroke prevention, congestive heart failure, use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, adult vaccines, areas of new diagnostic and therapeutic advances, infectious diseases in the elderly, metabolic syndrome, and alternative and complementary medicine. Health and public

policy discussions will focus on current issues affecting internists such as changes in MEDICARE and MEDICAID reimbursement. Thanks to the efforts of **Jacqueline Fincher, MD, FACP**, the session will include an outstanding coding session (3.0 CME credit hours) that will be tremendously helpful for everyone who practices medicine.

The meeting program is packed, but we hope we will keep your attention throughout because of the timely topics, excellent speakers, and diverse presentation formats, including lecture, electronic audience participation, and panel discussions. Medical student and associates activities are interwoven and include posters sessions, medical jeopardy for medical students, and the popular associates' medical jeopardy competition among the residency training programs.

Friday evening will feature the annual Governor's reception and Saturday evening, the awards dinner. The third annual Leadership Award as well as chapter awards will be presented. The meeting is a great opportunity to gain up to 20.0 hours of CME credit while meeting and sharing a weekend with other ACP members and our next generation of internists.

Mark your calendar and plan to attend! Undoubtedly you and your family will enjoy a spring weekend in Savannah. Springtime in the south with azaleas in full bloom, walking tours, fabulous dinner cuisine, nightly entertainment, moonlight river cruises and a wide array of shopping boutiques, candy stores and antique shops will provide an exciting and fun-filled weekend for all members of the family.

The annual meeting program and registration form will be mailed soon. You may also view the program at the Georgia Chapter website, www.acponline.org/chapters/ga/.

See you in Savannah!

Walter Moore, MD, FACP

Program Chair, 2006 Program Planning Committee

ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES IN SAVANNAH DURING THE CHAPTER MEETING

Encourage your family to join you in Savannah for the Chapter meeting! The city will be in full bloom and hopefully the weather will be "perfect". Activities in Savannah during the weekend include the Savannah Music Festival (March 17-April 25), Tour of Homes and Gardens (March 23- 26), Annual Book Sale (March 24-25), Wild Island Journey through tidal creeks and marsh (March 25), and Live theatre on Tybee Island (March 24-April 3). There is truly something for everyone!

AWARDS NOMINATIONS

We will again recognize outstanding accomplishment of chapter members at the annual chapter meeting, March 24-26, 2006. Awards will be given in the following categories:

- ◆ **J. Willis Hurst Bedside Teaching Award** honors exemplary teachers of medicine who teach, role model, and mentor students to help them acquire the knowledge and bedside skills to become outstanding compassionate physicians.
- ◆ **Community-based Teaching Award** recognizes physicians with sustained and significant impact on medical students, residents, and other medical professionals as teachers in the community.
- ◆ **Volunteerism/Community Service Award** recognizes Chapter members who have made exemplary contributions in volunteerism and community service activities.
- ◆ **Laureate Award** honors Fellows or Masters of the American College of Physicians who have demonstrated an abiding commitment to excellence in medical care, education, or research, as well as service to their community, their Chapter, and the American College of Physicians.

Please send nominations and a short statement of recommendation indicating why you are nominating the individual to **David Haburchak, MD, FACP** at dhaburch@mail.mcgedu as soon as possible but no later than **December 15, 2005**.

GA CHAPTER ACP ASSOCIATES' ANNUAL ABSTRACT COMPETITION

The Memorial Health University Medical Center Internal Medicine Residency Program is hosting the Associates' program again this year. **Dr. Andy Gross**, chief resident, and **Dr. Jeff McCallum**, former chief resident, are coordinating the Associates' program.

The annual abstract competition is underway. The Call for Abstracts is out and abstracts will be accepted from all seven internal medicine residency programs in the state. The abstracts will be rated by reviewers to determine which submissions will be presented at the annual meeting. This year's categories include original research poster and podium presentations and clinical vignette poster and podium presentations. Authors of accepted abstracts will be notified by the end of December. Additional information is available at www.acponline.org/chapters/ga/ or by **contacting Dr. McCallum**.

The Associates will also compete in the annual Doctor's Dilemma competition (medical jeopardy). The winning team will be sponsored by the GA Chapter to participate in the National ACP Meeting Doctor's Dilemma. The winning Team from last year's meeting, Eisenhower Army Medical Center, will be competing in Philadelphia in April 2006 at the Annual National ACP Meeting. If you have a question and answer that you think would make a good jeopardy/Doctor's Dilemma question and answer, please forward it to mccalje1@memorialhealth.com.

Jeffrey McCallum, MD

CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW FACPS

Congratulations to the following members who were elected to Fellowship in the ACP in July 2005 and October 2005:

July 2005

Abimbola Akomolafe, MD, FACP
Erica Brownfield, MD, FACP
Farid Qazi, MD, FACP
Mohammad Rahman, MD, FACP
Clyde Watkins, MD, FACP

October 2005

Milene Argo, MD, FACP
Sherman Chamberlain, MD, FACP
Suku George, MD, FACP
William Gower, III, MD, FACP
Arvind Gupta, MD, FACP
Abul Mansur Hasan, MD, FACP
J Clark Hill, MD, FACP

Ali Khan, MD, FACP
Matthew Kuehnert, MD, FACP
Jaya Rao, MD, FACP
Anne Schuchat, MD, FACP
Nathan Spell, MD, FACP
Christine Zurawski, MD, FACP

I hope all new Fellows, and previously elected Fellows who have not yet participated in a Convocation Ceremony at the national ACP meeting, will participate in the 2006 annual meeting in Philadelphia. I look forward to leading you in the Convocation procession!

HATS OFF TO BILL WATERS, MD, MACP AND AUTHOR!

Congratulations to **William C. Waters, III, MD, MACP** on the publication of his novel, *Before I Sleep*. Although it is a novel, there is a lot of reality behind this terrific book about long days - and nights - on call. The book was published by Logikon Press and is available in major bookstores.

Congratulations, Bill!

Bill plans to attend our chapter meeting and sign books for those who would like a copy.

Please send suggestions for Hats Off recognition to **Rhee Fincher**, rfincher@mail.mcg.edu. Hats Off recognizes special accomplishments of chapter members.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT... IT'S TIME TO ELECT OUR NEXT GOVERNOR-ELECT!

The chapter cannot lose - we have two superb candidates who are running for governor-elect, **William T. Browne**, MD, FACP and **Vincent M. Nicolais**, MD, FACP. Our next governor will be a man, an internist, and a critical care specialist. Read on to learn more similarities and differences between the candidates.



William T. Browne, MD, FACP earned his MD from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and completed his internship at Letterman Army Medical Center, San Francisco, CA, residency at Madigan Army Medical Center, Fort Lewis, WA, and Critical Care Medicine Fellowship at the Mayo Graduate School of Medicine, Rochester, MN. He is certified by the ABIM in internal medicine and critical care medicine. Currently, he is a Colonel in the Active Duty Army and is Internal Medicine Consultant to the Surgeon General. Bill is stationed at Dwight David Eisenhower Army Medical Center, Fort Gordon, GA where he was Internal Residency Program Director 1995-2003 and Chief of Medicine 2003-2005.

Bill has been active in the ACP since he became an Associate member in 1988. He became a Member in 1992 and advanced to Fellowship in 1999. He has served on the Georgia Chapter Governor's Advisory Council since 2000. He was the Georgia ACP Associates' Competition coordinator 2002-2004 and has been a member of the Georgia ACP Scientific Program Committee member since 2002. Bill is a superb teacher and has received the Georgia ACP J. Willis Hurst Bedside Teaching Award and Army ACP Master Teacher Award.

He has served on many hospital committees including credentials, ethics, and education.

Dr. Browne's Vision Statement as a candidate for governor-elect follows...

"The ACP is a strong, value-based advocate for the best in medical care and professionalism, consistently maintaining its focus on improvements in access to care, evidence-based medicine, recruitment of quality students, and fairness in remuneration for general internists. I have been an active member of the ACP for 17 years, recognized with lifetime teaching awards by both the Army and Georgia chapters. I am a Fellow in two additional subspecialty colleges, but have chosen to devote all of my efforts to ACP activities. I am a clinician, an educator, and have extensive medical leadership experience. I have served as program director, department chair and consultant to the Surgeon General for Internal Medicine. I believe I can serve well on the ACP Board of Governors, using my abilities, my experience, and my deep commitment, to further the aims of this premiere voice for internal medicine practitioners and patients."



Vincent M. Nicolais, MD, FACP earned his MD from the University of Bologna and completed his residency in internal medicine at Westchester County Medical Center, New York Medical College. He is certified by the ABIM in critical care medicine and critical care medicine, and earned recertification in internal medicine. Currently, he is Chief of Internal Medicine and Critical Care Medical Director, at The Medical Center, Columbus, GA.

Vince has been active in the ACP since he became an Associate member in 1979. He became a Member in 1989 and advanced to Fellowship in 1998. He has been an active leader in the GA chapter since 1996 when he was appointed to the Governor's Advisory Council. He served as chair of the Program Planning Committee from 1996-1999. As program chair, Vince involved Associate members and students as members of the Committee and worked hard to unite academicians and community physicians in program planning. He could not stay away from program planning and, in 2004, chaired the first annual pre-course held in conjunction with the Chapter meeting. Vince served as chair of the Membership Committee from 1999-2001. As chair, he conceptualized and implemented the GA Chapter Solidarity Award.

Vince was recognized by the Chapter for his outstanding contributions when he received a Certificate of Appreciation for Outstanding Contributions to the GA Chapter 1997-1999. In 2002, he received the coveted Laureate Award that honors Fellows "who have demonstrated by their example and conduct an abiding commitment to excellence in medical care, education, or research and in service to their community, their chapter and the ACP."

Vince has served on so many hospital and service committees it would require the entire Governor's Newsletter to list them! He has served in nearly every role in the Society of Critical Care Medicine, including President of the Southeastern Regional Seven States Chapter of the Society of Critical Care Medicine. He received the Dr. Joseph and Rae Brown Award in 2005 for outstanding contributions to multidisciplinary critical care on a local and regional level.

Vision statement on page 6

Dr. Nicolais' Vision Statement as a candidate for governor-elect follows...

"I am honored to be chosen as a Governor-elect candidate. During twelve years service in the Georgia ACP, I have been committed to enhancing education and unity amongst our members including students, residents, academicians, community physicians, generalists and sub-specialists. I have sought to increase and strengthen our membership. This time of flux is characterized by increased regulation and outside influence on the practice of medicine. My vision implements a unified response embracing the mission and goals of the ACP. We must pursue excellence in patient care as well as responsible positions on government policy. As governor I would strive for collaboration with health care and educational organizations, improved working relationships with third party payers and a stronger representation with the state and federal legislature. Given the privilege to serve you as governor, I will hear your voice, represent you and pursue the best interests of our patients and membership."

GEORGIA ACP HEALTH AND PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

"Those who are too smart to engage in politics are punished by being governed by those who are dumber." Socrates

Become a Key Contact! This is an easy way to learn what the federal legislature is considering related to healthcare and to impact legislators' decisions. About 120 GA Chapter members are Key Contacts and receive electronic Legislative Alerts from the national ACP. The Legislative Alerts provide an easy mechanism to respond by contacting your legislators about an issue as well as an easy way to remain apprised of key actions in Congress that impact us all. I hope you will become a Key Contact by going to www.acponline.org/advocacy to sign up. If you would like to also receive regular updates regarding key legislation at the state and national levels, email me at jwfinchermd@cs.com, and I will put you on the Chapter HPPC list.

Seven Action Items for All Chapter Members

1. Medicare Reimbursement

The Medicare physician payment rates are set to be cut 26% over the next five years. The first cut of 4.4% is scheduled to go into effect starting January 1, 2006. These cuts are based on a flawed formula called the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR). The SGR links the Gross National Product (GNP) with physician reimbursement, so a decline in the GNP precipitates a decline in physician reimbursement. If these cuts are allowed to proceed, Medicare payment rates in 2014 will be half of what they were in 1991, after adjusting for inflation, while practice costs continue to rise significantly. This issue is critically important to the practice of internal medicine and to patient access. Because of the Hurricane Katrina disaster and the war in Iraq, Congress is devoting little attention to this issue. On January 1, we will all pay dearly if Congress doesn't hear our voices and change the SGR. The national ACP legislative office in Washington, DC is working diligently on this issue and you can help also.

Action Item: Go to www.acponline.org/advocacy to learn more and email your legislators immediately to change the physician payment rates so reimbursement is based on the cost of practice NOT the SGR formula.

2. Medicaid Reform/State Health Employee Contracts: A Success and a Challenge

The new CMO contracts go into effect starting April 1, 2006 and the whole state is expected to be covered by December 1, 2006. The Governor's office attempted to mandate open panels for Medicaid patients to coincide with commercial panels in practices. This would have meant you could not limit the number of Medicaid patients in your practice if you were NOT limiting all other types of patients. Thanks to protests from numerous physician groups, including our chapter, the Governor's office and the Department of Community Health (DCH) have changed the policy so there will be no mandates on the numbers of Medicaid patients in your practice.

On the other hand, DCH bid out the state employees' contract to only one provider, United Healthcare, and included an "all products clause." This clause would require providers to accept all products (e.g., HMO, PPO, POS) of United Healthcare. An "all products" clause is a red flag you should look out for in the negotiation of managed care contracts. These clauses are designed to lock you into lower reimbursement contracts, since you are forced to be on all panels. We have a big opportunity to speak up.

Action Item: I hope everyone will flood the Governor's office with calls to the Governor's policy advisor, Mr. Abel Ortiz at (404) 656-5947, and tell him accepting one plan should not obligate you to accept all plans by United Healthcare or any other company awarded the bid by the DCH.

3. Medicaid Reimbursement

DCH is indicating the Medicaid reimbursements could improve in the 2007 budget appropriations. Three proposals have been made: (1) A 2% reduction from 2006 appropriations, representing a \$114 million cut, (2) Keep funding at the same level as 2006, resulting in a \$74 million cut, and (3) Increase the Medicaid budget by 4%, resulting in a \$5 million increase.

Action Item: Talk to your legislators about Medicaid reimbursement, and the need to cover the cost of actually seeing the patient.

4. Tort Reform

As you know, meaningful tort reform was passed and signed into law on February 16, 2005. The battle now shifts to protecting the law. This is a critical issue because 5 House bills and 1 Senate Bill have already been introduced that, if passed, would chip away at the tort reform law. As internists, we must remain vigilant and communicate with our legislators. You may not realize that internal medicine physicians are sued more than any other specialty in Georgia. Tort reform remains an important issue for us.

Action item: Contact your local House and Senate legislators to let them know how important maintaining meaningful tort reform is to your patients, your practice viability, your hospital, and your community. Tell them to vote against any measure that weakens the present law as it stands now or opens it up for amendments.

5. National Legislative Day 2005

A team of nine from our Chapter participated in the ACP Legislative Day in Washington, DC on May 18-19, 2005 during which we talked with our US Congressmen and Senators on issues important to internal medicine. The team consisted of **Drs. Clyde Watkins, Mike Heisler, Glenn Carter, Julie Barnes, Joe Stubbs, Rhee Fincher, Jacqueline Fincher,** and **Jeff McCallum** (Associate member), and medical student **Megan McCauley**. We had great representation of our chapter, including a student and a resident, representatives of all four medical schools, private practice and academic internists, rural and urban internists, and men and women. We spoke with over half of our Congressional delegation.

Action Item: We need to identify an interested internal medicine physician in the Gainesville area (U.S. Congressman Nathan Deal's district) to join our Health & Public Policy Committee. This is not a time-consuming responsibility and we really need representation from all congressional districts. If you are interested, please contact me at jwfinchermd@cs.com.

6. State Legislative Day 2006

State Legislative Day is scheduled for Thursday, February 9, 2006 at the State Capitol. The GA chapter organizes and participates in this day of education and meetings with legislators in conjunction with our primary care colleagues in family medicine and pediatrics. The day includes an opportunity to hear from key legislators and meet with legislators from your district. These are the people who create the laws in Georgia that impact the health care of all Georgians. Please help them make decisions that are good for health care in the state.

Action Item: Mark your calendar for February 9, 2006 and plan to be here!

7. ACP Political Action Committee (PAC)

ACP Services PAC is the new political action committee sponsored by the American College of Physicians Services, Inc. It is a voluntary, nonpartisan political organization established in 2004 to increase the participation of internists and internal medicine subspecialists in the electoral process, and enable the specialty to play a more active role in the development of federal policy on health care.

Action Item: Go to www.acpservices.org to learn more and become a contributing member.

Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, FACP
Chair, Health & Public Policy Committee