

Georgia Chapter GOVERNOR'S NEWSLETTER

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

Fall 2006

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



GOVERNOR'S CORNER

KAREN S. TOWNSEND NAMED INAUGURAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GA CHAPTER

The Governor's Advisory Council (GAC) identified the following key chapter priorities in 2004 at the beginning of my term as Governor:

- Expanding membership at all levels, including Members, Fellows, Associates, and Students
- Increasing effectiveness in advocacy for internists and patients
- Enhancing educational program effectiveness, including fund raising.

We have made progress in each area, but the GAC decided the chapter needs an executive director (ED) to enhance further our effectiveness in accomplishing our strategic priorities and meeting the needs of our members. In response, I created an executive director committee last spring, initially to determine the feasibility of recruiting an ED and subsequently to search for just the right person to fill our chapter's needs. I thank **Vince Nicolais**, Governor-elect and chair of the committee, and committee members **Jacqueline Fincher, MD, FACP**, **Glenn Carter, MD, FACP**, **Len Lichtenfeld, MD, FACP**, **Joe Stubbs, MD, FACP**, and **Henry Patton, MD, FACP** for accomplishing the task with such aplomb.

I am delighted to announce that **Karen Townsend, RN, BA** has been named the GA chapter's inaugural Executive Director. I hope you will attend the March 2007 chapter meeting to welcome Karen and begin to get to know her. Karen is a delightful and capable person who has extensive relevant experience as she summarized in the following excerpt from her letter of interest:



"I am eager to work on projects that promote membership growth, legislative initiatives and increase profitability of annual educational conferences. Through various roles at the Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and WellStar Health System, I have honed the skills required for success in this position. My administrative skills were enhanced by my degree in Organizational Leadership from Mercer University. My background as a registered nurse enables me to understand the challenges faced by the medical profession regarding legislative issues, contracts, scope of practice and continuing education. Without strong professional organizations, physicians will be in danger of losing their current rights to practice medicine and provide quality patient care, and to have a voice that is heard and respected by legislators and healthcare organizations regarding state laws, public health policies, and contracts with insurers."

Karen has exceptional skills and is committed wholeheartedly to serving the chapter and helping us rise to the next level of effectiveness. Please join me in welcoming Karen and working with her.

During the ED search process, several people asked, "What about **Nancy Brady**?", usually followed by, "I hope she isn't leaving." Nancy has done an incredible job as the chapter's part-time administrator since 2000. I could not have fulfilled my responsibilities as Governor without her, and I mean that sincerely. However, unrelated to recruitment of an Executive Director, she has expressed her desire to "retire" when I complete my term as Governor in the spring of 2007. Karen will begin her tenure as ED this fall and **Vince Nicolais** is identifying the chapter's next administrative assistant currently to ensure a smooth transition.



With these transitions, there are more reasons than ever to attend the 2007 chapter meeting:

- Welcome Executive Director Karen Townsend
- Honor "retiring" Chapter Administrator Nancy Brady
- "Inaugurate" incoming Governor Vince Nicolais
- Enjoy long-standing and meet new colleagues
- Learn from a wonderful program - clinical updates, advocacy, practice management, and Associates and students' sessions.

I look forward to seeing you in March! Please register early - and bring your family for a spring weekend in Savannah.

Rhee Fincher, MD, FACP
Governor, GA Chapter

ANNOUNCING THE GA CHAPTER ACP SPRING MEETING: MARCH 9-11, 2007

The fall and winter holidays are approaching, but already our chapter's attention is focused on springtime in Savannah as we announce the upcoming annual scientific chapter meeting March 9-11, 2007. Planning for the 2007 meeting builds on the resounding success of last year's annual chapter scientific meeting. The two and one half day scientific meeting featured the first comprehensive presentation by the GCC to any state physician's society as well as numerous informative updates, practice management sessions, and special activities for Associates and students. Participants could earn **19.25 CME category 1 credit hours** while also enjoying the relaxed atmosphere of Savannah in the springtime.

The theme of the 2007 meeting is "*Sustaining Excellence in Internal Medicine*." By popular vote, the meeting will be held again in Savannah March 9-11, 2007 at the Hyatt Regency Riverfront Hotel. This year's meeting is being co-chaired by **Walter Moore**, MD, FACP, Professor of Medicine and Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education at the Medical College of Georgia, and **Chesley Richards**, MD, FACP, Deputy Director, Division of Healthcare Quality Promotion, National Center for Preparedness, Detection and Control of Infectious Diseases (NCPDCID), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The meeting will begin with a thematic morning on peri-operative medicine for internists followed by an exciting mix of practical clinical updates on topics including office GYN for the internist, pulmonary hypertension, new diagnostic and therapeutic advances, and applications of leading edge research to clinical practice. Practice management sessions will include Medicare updates, electronic medical records, advocacy, health and public policy discussions with an expert panel, health literacy, and disclosure of medical errors. There will be a three-hour office management seminar focusing on business concerns of busy practicing physicians. The program includes a variety of learning strategies including lecture and seminar style sessions, panel discussions, and an audience-participation

internal medicine board review session. Participants will have ample opportunity for questions and answer sessions and for the exchange of ideas with the presenters and other participants.

The program includes concurrent medical student, Associate and Member activities, such as a poster session, clinical vignette and research presentations, medical jeopardy for medical students, and the always popular Associates' medical jeopardy competition among the residency training programs. The meeting will be highlighted by the presentation of the ACP GA Chapter's fourth annual Leadership Award. Prior recipients have included **R. Kirby Godsey**, PhD - President Emeritus, Mercer University in 2006; Dr. **Julie Gerberding**, Director of the CDC in 2005, and Dr. David Satcher, former US Surgeon General of the United States who was the first recipient of the Chapter's Leadership Award in 2004. The leadership award winner will deliver our keynote address on Friday afternoon. We are privileged to have **Kathleen M. Weaver**, MACP as our College Representative. Dr. Weaver is a member of the Board of Regents and is director of the Health Resources Commission for the state of Oregon. She is known nationally for her effective advocacy on behalf of physicians and patients.

The meeting is a great opportunity to get up to 18 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, nightly entertainment, 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 available on the Georgia Chapter website (www.acponline.org/chapters/ga/)

Walter J. Moore, MD, FACP
Chair, Program Planning Committee

ASSOCIATES' CORNER

The GA Chapter ACP meeting in Savannah will again feature the Associates' program as part of its schedule of events. Associates will compete for cash prizes in the poster display competition and oral presentations. Any internal medicine resident who is an Associate member of the ACP is welcome and encouraged to attend. Please visit <http://www.mcgresidents.com/abstractsubmission.html> for the abstract submission website. This link can also be found on the chapter website (www.acponline.org/chapters/ga/state_meet.html). All residency program directors and chief residents were notified of the November 1 deadline for submissions. We hope to have an array of presentations from all internal medicine residency programs in Georgia.

The Associates' program will be expanded this year to include special workshops designed for advancing careers and education of Associate members. Two Saturday afternoon sessions include "*Contract Negotiations for the New Physician*", presented by a lawyer who specializes in contract negotiation, and "*Getting the Fellowship You Want; How to Strengthen your Application*." The latter will be a lunchtime discussion featuring several current Fellows and subspecialty faculty members who are involved in the selection of Fellows.

The popular Medical Jeopardy will also be featured as part of the Associates' program. The Medical College of Georgia will defend the title against all comers from the state. We look forward to a great turnout from the Associates of all programs in Georgia!

Matt Diamond, D.O.
Saloni Tanna, M.D.
Chief Residents, Medical College of Georgia
Associates Program Co-chairs

UPDATE ON STUDENT ACTIVITIES

The Students Advisory Council engaged in very productive discussions during its September 16, 2006 meeting at Lake Oconee. Students and faculty from each of the medical schools met to establish plans for this upcoming year.

The goal for the upcoming year is to increase student involvement and participation at the state meeting. At this year's meeting, students will have a poster session, Medical Jeopardy competition, and workshops. The student workshops have been moved to Saturday 4:00 to 6:30 PM to improve attendance. The theme for this year's workshops will be "Everything I wish I would have known when I started medical school - Getting ready for residency beginning with the first year." There will be a students' abstract session again at this year's meeting. Students must be members of the ACP to submit an abstract, and all students attending the meeting must complete a registration form. Student members of the ACP do not have to pay the registration fee.

INTERNAL MEDICINE INTEREST GROUP (IMIG) UPDATES

Mercer University School of Medicine

The Mercer IMIG has had two meetings this academic year with plans on having four additional meetings. The first meeting discussed combined training in medicine and pediatrics. The themes of the other meetings will incorporate discussions by subspecialists to compliment the organ-based curriculum in the second year.

Morehouse School of Medicine

The Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) IMIG kicked off this year by organizing and participating in the 1st Annual Primary Care Interest Group Week. This week provided first and second year students with an introduction into the various Primary Care Interest Groups on MSM's campus.

The IMIG participated in the first Class of 2009 Health Fair. The Health Fair targeted individuals from 4 to 70 years of age and offered glucose testing, spirometry, nutritional information, glaucoma testing through the Sight Savers Program, and HIV/STD information just to name a few. The President's Project for this year is Save Lids to Save Lives Yoplait Lid Drive.

Future meetings will include an introduction to some of the subspecialties of medicine, a discussion on organizing community interventions based on experiences with the Katrina relief effort, and trips to Grady Hospital to listen to lectures with 3rd and 4th year medical students. In addition, the IMIG will have its first annual Healthy Education Seminar Series to include such topics as exercise, nutrition, breast and testicular exams, signs of prostate trouble, alcohol use, smoking cessation, and health lifestyle choices.



Medical College of Georgia

Joe Stubbs, MD, FACP, Past Governor, ACP, spoke to the IMIG about the private practice of general internal medicine in October. The IMIG plans to have future meetings that introduce students to the various subspecialties of medicine, how to obtain a residency, a panel discussion with residents to discuss the residency application process, lifestyle issues, preparing for fellowships, and Medical Jeopardy. Major projects for the IMIG include participating in volunteer activities to help care for the medically underserved and a shadowing experience for first and second year students.

T. Andrew Albritton, MD, FACP
Co-chair, Associates and Students Advisory Council

AWARDS NOMINATIONS

We will again recognize outstanding efforts of chapter members at the annual chapter meeting, March 9-11, 2007. Please send nominations and a short statement of recommendation indicating why you are nominating the individual to **David Haburchak**, MD, FACP at dhaburch@mail.mcg.edu no later than November 20, 2006.

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.

HATS OFF TO WALTER J. MOORE, MD, FACP

Congratulations and thanks to **Walt Moore**, recipient of the Fall 2006 "*Hats Off*" award for contributions to the chapter. Walt has done a wonderful job as chair of the Annual Chapter Meeting Program Planning Committee for 2005, 2006, and 2007. He agreed to chair the committee for two years and is now completing three. As an example of "exceeding expectations", he agreed to serve as co-chair for the 2008 meeting, for which **Chesley Richards**, MD, FACP will serve as chair of the Program Planning Committee.

On behalf of all members of the chapter, I thank Walt for his effective, dedicated, innovative, responsive leadership of the Program Planning Committee. Several evaluations of each meeting for which Walt has been program chair have dubbed it, "the best ever". Plan to join us in March 2007 for another "best ever"!

HEALTH AND PUBLIC POLICY: FALL, 2006 UPDATE

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

How true. This is an election year in case you haven't noticed, and no better time to engage in your government!! Please consider these 8 opportunities:

Medicare Reimbursement

The Medicare physician payment rates will be cut by 5.1% on January 1, 2007 unless the lame duck Congress acts. Remember we received NO INCREASE for 2006 and a recent deferment of pay from September 22-30 because Medicare expenditures exceeded the fiscal year budget. Did your payroll or overhead get deferred 9 days? The impending 5.1% cut January 1 is based on the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) that is tied to the overall economy, not cost of practice. If these cuts are allowed to proceed at the present rate, 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. Let your Congressman hear from you.

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

New Georgia Medicaid Program

The new Medicaid program has now rolled out throughout the whole state, the first half on June 1 and the second half on September 1. The latter seems to have gone better than the former. Only six Chapter members responded to our email request this summer for feedback regarding payment and enrollment issues. It is critical I hear from you if you are currently having significant problems with the new Medicaid program and the CMOs (Care Management Organizations) running it. Otherwise I will assume no news is good news. We have been actively engaged through the Council on Legislation, with MAG (Medical Association of Georgia) in working with DCH (Dept of Community Health) to address issues with the new Medicaid program. Please send me your feedback, jwfincher-md@cs.com.

Tort Reform

As you know meaningful tort reform was passed and signed into law on February 16, 2005. The battle now is protecting the law. This is a critical issue for internists because internal medicine physicians are sued more than physicians in any other specialty in Georgia.

We expect more legislative and probably judicial challenges to tort reform this year, especially at the Supreme Court of Georgia where challenge to the constitutionality of the tort reform law with its \$350,000 cap on non-economic damages is expected. Think long and hard about whom you vote for in the Supreme Court Judge election, where the ultimate battle may be this year.

Legislative Agenda for 2007

A lot will depend on the results of the election. Top issues we would like to address include:

- Increasing the tobacco tax because higher tobacco taxes dramatically decreases teen smoking rates
- Working on an improved State Cancer Plan because of the importance to the state and the fact that the Georgia Cancer Coalition is well established and in a position to act effectively
- Working with other health partners to address obesity because obesity is a major health problem in Georgia
- Working with the State Health Department/Governor's office on funding for vaccinations because of the increased availability of vaccinations and need to vaccinate the underinsured
- Continuing to defend tort reform
- Monitoring scope of practice issues.

For other up to date information on your state and federal legislators go to www.vote-smart.org . It is vitally important for our representatives to hear from us regularly concerning the issues impacting internal medicine. Tell them your stories and how all of these important issues impact your patients and your ability to practice medicine.

It's an election year; find a candidate(s) you can support.

A campaign donation from you lets your elected officials know you are willing to put money where your mouth is. Running for office is expensive. **If we want good people to represent us, we must help elect them.** Case in point: In Georgia's 2004 election, lawyers gave over \$7746.00 each toward political campaigns and doctors gave an average of \$37.50. What will Georgia doctors do this year?

State Legislative Day: Thursday, February 8, 2007

This is an annual event at the State Capital in conjunction with our primary care colleagues in Family Medicine and Pediatrics. **Mark your calendar and plan to be there!**

ACP Political Action Committee

ACP Services PAC is our 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 sub-specialists in the electoral process and enable the specialty to play a more active role in the development of federal policy on health care. ACP Services PAC has already given more than \$87,000 to help candidates supportive of ACP stands on issues important to internal medicine, such as Medicare reimbursement, ACP's 7 year plan to cover the uninsured, and pay for performance and how it will be developed and implemented.

Action to Take: Go to www.acpservices.org to learn more & become a contributing member.

Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, FACP
Health & Public Policy Chairman

Important Dates to Remember

**GA Primary Care Advocacy and
Leadership Day at State Capitol
February 8, 2007**

**2007 GA Chapter ACP meeting
Savannah, GA
March 9-11, 2007**

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

**National Leadership Day in
Washington, DC
May 15-16, 2007**

**VISIT THE CHAPTER'S WEBSITE
WWW.ACPONLINE.ORG/CHAPTERS/GA/**

