

Georgia Chapter GOVERNOR'S NEWSLETTER

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

Fall 2003

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

FROM THE GOVERNOR'S CORNER



**Ruth-Marie E.
Fincher , MD, FACP**

Although I became governor of the Georgia Chapter of the ACP at the end of the annual ACP meeting in San Diego in April, this is my first Governor's Newsletter. I want to begin by thanking Joe Stubbs again for being such a terrific governor. Joe built upon the strong foundation created by former governors Charlie Harrison and Mark Silverman, by whom we were both mentored, and led several new initiatives, such as creation of the Georgia Primary Care Coalition and Leadership Day at the state capitol. The chapter received a Chapter Excellence Award each year during Joe's tenure as governor as well as several Evergreen Awards. I did not realize how prestigious and coveted by the governors these awards are until I attended the Board of Governors' spring meeting. I want to congratulate Joe again on his election to the Board of Regents. I am beginning to truly appreciate the magnitude of the work Joe appeared to do so "effortlessly" and efficiently. Georgia has been exceptionally well represented in the senior leadership of the ACP by members such as former chair of the Board of Regents and ACP Foundation President Bob Copeland and former ACP president Sandy Fryhofer. Nick Davies was a Regent and president-elect of the ACP at the time of his untimely death.

I reviewed the mission and goals of the ACP as I began my term as governor to help me focus on the organization's priorities. The ACP goals focus on two broad domains: internists and patients, and residents and students. I have structured the Governor's Advisory Council to emphasize these domains by creating an expanded Health and Public Policy Committee (HPPC), led by **Jacqueline Fincher**, and Associates and Students Advisory Council, led by **Andy Albritton and Bill Browne**. In her oversight role, Jacqueline will lead Georgia's participation in the Health Information Referral Project (MedlinePlus initiative) and serve as liaison to the Medical Association of Georgia (MAG). She will also work with **Ric Fullerton** to organize the state and national Leadership Days on Capitol Hill, and Cover the Uninsured Week activities. She and **Jim Hotz** will represent the ACP on the Primary Care Coalition. She will also work with **Mike Heisler** on the Eliminating Healthcare Disparities in the Southeast program. Andy and Bill will co-chair the Associates and Students Advisory Council. They led a highly successful Council meeting on August 23 at Lake Oconee that focused on increasing membership, Associates and students participation in the annual state meetings, and revitalizing internal medicine clubs in each medical school. I was delighted that six of the seven residency programs were represented by their program director and a chief resident, and all four medical schools were represented by advisors and internal medicine club officers.

I am grateful to all members who have agreed to serve on the 2003-2004 Governor's Advisory Council and to chair or serve on chapter committees.

If I have not already contacted you, please let me know if you are interested in being a chapter leader by serving on or chairing a committee. I need all the help I can get!

I would like to begin a "Hat's Off" column with the next Newsletter to highlight notable accomplishments of one or more chapter members. Please send me (rfincher@mail.mcg.edu) the name of your "Hat's Off" candidate and a brief description of why you chose that person. The nominee's accomplishment(s) do not need to be ACP related but should exemplify the mission of the College.

Please send items you would like to have included in our Newsletter to **Nancy Brady** or me. Consider sending items such as practice or clinical teaching "tips", valuable websites, or quotes you think others would enjoy.

Thanks very much for contributing to the vibrancy of the Georgia Chapter!

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

ANNOUNCING THE GA CHAPTER ACP COMBINED SPRING MEETING

FUNDAMENTAL CRITICAL CARE SUPPORT (FCCS) COURSE, MARCH 24-26, 2004 FOLLOWED BY ANNUAL CHAPTER SCIENTIFIC MEETING, MARCH 26-28, 2004 THIS YEAR'S SPRING MEET WILL BE A DOUBLE FEATURE!

Fundamental Critical Care Support Course

Vince Nicolais is directing a nationally acclaimed critical care course. The FCCS curriculum was developed by the Society of Critical Care Medicine to provide exposure to fundamental principles of critical care to healthcare providers who do not have formal training in intensive care medicine.

The FCCS Program is most helpful to primary care physicians and surgeons who wish to broaden their specialty focused critical care exposure. The course consists of lectures and skill stations, which offer guidance in decision-making and instruction in basic techniques necessary in the management of critically ill or injured patients. The course carries approximately 16 hours of CME credit. It will begin at noon on Wednesday, March 24 and end at noon on March 26.

The Fundamental Critical Care Support Course would also be helpful in training physicians to handle victims of disasters. It is extremely useful to physicians on the staff of a hospital trying to meet standards set by the Leap Frog initiative for recognition as an institution providing a high standard of quality care.

The FCCS course agenda and registration form will be included in our next Georgia Chapter newsletter and will be available on the Georgia Chapter website (www.acponline.org/chapters/ga/).

Georgia Chapter Annual Scientific Meeting

Following a successful 2003 Georgia Chapter Scientific Meeting, Harold Szerlip, Professor of Medicine at the Medical College of Georgia, and Joyce Doyle, Residency Program Director and Associate Professor of Medicine at Emory University School of Medicine, will again co-chair the 2004 Scientific Meeting. The theme of the meeting is "Internal Medicine: From the Office to the Bedside and Beyond". By popular vote, the meeting will be held in Savannah March 26-28, 2004 at the Hyatt. The program will feature practical updates on medical advancements and practice management. The format, using lecture and seminar style combined with workshops and an audience-participation Board Review, will afford the opportunity for questions and answer sessions and interchange of ideas. This is a great opportunity to gain approximately 17.5 hours of CME credit while meeting and sharing a weekend with other ACP members.

Mark your calendar and plan to attend! Undoubtedly your family would enjoy a spring weekend in Savannah. The 69th Annual Savannah Tour of Homes and Gardens is being held March 25-28, 2004, AND the Savannah Music Festival will also be taking place during the time of our meeting.

The annual meeting program and registration form will be included in our next Georgia Chapter newsletter and will be available on the Georgia Chapter website (www.acponline.org/chapters/ga/).

CHALLENGE TO MEDICAL STUDENT ACP MEMBERS

The Council of Student members of the ACP has announced the fifth year of its award program for internal medicine clubs. The Governor's Challenge is for Georgia to receive both awards in 2004! We can do it with our terrific student leadership.

Fifteen Percent Program: This award is based on increasing medical student membership in the ACP. It will be given to all schools whose membership increases by at least 15% of the total medical student body beginning July 1, 2003 and ending March 15, 2004. Each winning school will receive a Certificate of Merit and the school with the greatest percentage increase will receive a monetary prize.

Forty Percent Program: This award is based on high overall medical student membership in the ACP. It will be given to all medical schools whose medical student membership is at least 40% of the total medical student body for the entire membership year beginning July 1, 2003 and ending June 30, 2004. Each winning school will receive a Certificate of Merit and will be announced in the Fall 2004 issue of *IMPACT*. The school with the highest overall medical student membership will receive a monetary prize.

ASSOCIATES' COLUMN

by **Matt Pantsari, Chief Resident, Eisenhower Army Medical Center**

Picture this scenario. You are in the midst of completing a rigorous, thirty-six month training program. Your pay is poor, the hours are long, and you are mandated to spend countless time away from loved ones on nights, weekends, and holidays. The work is difficult, both physically and emotionally. As you have overcome its many obstacles, this "gauntlet" finally brings you to its conclusion. Now, many of you may be imagining the Marine Corps commercial, in which a handsome boy is placed in a "similar" situation. As he runs his obstacle course through sweat and toil, he comes to the end where he meets his final test, a gigantic evil dragon. Armed only with sword and determination, he defeats the monster to claim the honor of "The Few, The Proud, The Marines." Strange though it may seem, your "gauntlet" and his may not be that different. Your dragon lives in Atlanta, GA and exists in the form of four, small glossy books. For a mere \$905, and extra for lodging, you get your crack at this monster. Proclaimed "the toughest test you'll ever take," this final hurdle of training is an important one. To master it leaves a wonderful, final mark on your years of training. How exactly to master it is a difficult question to answer.

Not yet having received my scores, I will in no way, shape or form tell you how to prepare for the American Board of Internal Medicine's Board Certification Examination. That is far too individual, and I am far too humble. However, as one who has fought the good fight, I will share with you some feelings regarding the test that you may find helpful.

1. **No Tricks.** The ABIM does not want you to miss questions. While I don't have the pleasure of working for them, I feel this is true. Try not to "assume" that they are giving wrong information in the questions, or trying to trick you into a sucker answer. Cross out answers that are conflicted by data within the question.
2. **When in Doubt... Pick it out.** For questions that seem really difficult, the key is often within the body of the question and you just skimmed over it. Read the question slowly, over and over again if necessary. Pay particular attention to each word and description. Often times, you will pick up clues that will unlock the dilemma.
3. **Don't Ever Change your Answer.** Barring a TIA during the test that caused you to pick a silly answer, or an obvious mistake, just don't do this. It almost never works in your favor.
4. **An Ounce of Prevention...** The time to prepare for this test is right now. It is so comprehensive, and requires such a detailed knowledge of medicine, that to attempt to "study" in the six weeks that separate graduation from test time is unrealistic. Some type of plan to perform "test centered studying" during residency is especially important. MKSAP really does cover the material, and the questions closely resemble the ABIM exam in content. The new version of MKSAP will be available this year.

An excellent review book my department has used is the Mayo Clinic Internal Medicine Board Review. A new edition is expected out this June.

5. **Strength In Numbers.** Tied into #4 above, take the effort to push your colleagues and junior residents in their board preparation. Some type of formal, or informal board preparatory schedule can do wonders for your personal preparation, and can be made more powerful by doing it in groups. This allows the Type A in you to run wild, and attempt to "one-up" your colleagues!

6. **Seek advice from you Chief.** See your friendly Chief Resident for more details. The sooner the better! The details are fresh and we are quickly descending from the pinnacle of our medical knowledge (I hope I am kidding).

Best of luck in your board preparation. I hope that I, like you, will become one of "The Few, The Proud, The Board Certified Internist!"

UPDATE ON STUDENT ACTIVITIES

**BY ANDY ALBRITTON, CHAIR,
STUDENT PROGRAMS**

The Associates/Students' Advisory Council engaged in lively and productive discussions during its August 23, 2003 meeting at Lake Oconee. Student and faculty representatives from each medical school's Internal Medicine Interest Group discussed three issues: 1) increasing student membership, 2) increasing the vitality of the internal medicine interest groups, and 3) increasing student participation in the state meetings.

Each school has an internal medicine club, jointly sponsored by the Georgia Chapter of the ACP and the school's Department of Medicine. However, the vitality of the clubs varies considerably. The students accepted a challenge to increase student membership in the College, as well as participation in the state ACP chapter and in their school's internal medicine interest group.

Competition to increase membership and enhance interest group vitality: Each internal medicine interest group will:

1. Develop a "catchy" byline and logo for their internal medicine interest group
2. Develop and produce an advertisement that includes the byline and logo (e.g., posters, flyers, or electronic communications) to educate all medical students about the College and benefits of membership.

The bylines, logos, and advertisements submitted by each interest group will be judged at the 2004 annual state meeting and a winner selected. Each interest group will adopt the winning product and use it to advertise internal medicine, the ACP, and their internal medicine club to their student colleagues.

Increasing student participation at state meetings: In addition to the poster session for the membership campaign, the students will be encouraged to submit posters of clinical vignettes and patient education materials.

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS PLAN FOR 2003-2005
BY BILL BROWNE, CO-CHAIR, ASSOCIATES' PROGRAM**

The Chief Resident Associate members and their program directors enjoyed a productive meeting at Lake Oconee, August 23, 2003 during which they discussed strategies to increase Associate membership and participation in the Georgia Chapter. The Associates proposed a mentorship program consisting of a group of volunteer ACP members from throughout the state who would serve as mentors to medical students and Associates. Mentors could discuss career goals and opportunities, such as private practice versus academic medicine, as well as application for residency or fellowship. General internists and subspecialists from academic as well as private practice settings would be valuable mentors as Associates explore the broad spectrum of career opportunities in medicine.

The Associates discussed ideas for spring meetings for 2004 and 2005. They would like more opportunities for Associates and students to mingle with fellows and members. They were enthusiastic about the possibility of a practice management seminar that would focus on what to expect when entering private practice and a board preparation seminar that could be held prior to the 2005 ACP meeting, similar to this year's critical care course. A board preparation seminar would be an effective learning tool for members at all levels, medical students as they prepare for USMLE examinations, residents as they prepare for in-service and ABIM certifying examinations, and board-certified internists as they prepare for recertification. The Associates also proposed a lottery in which all state meeting registrants would participate. The prize would be opportunity to attend the annual national ACP meeting at no cost. Now, they just need to identify the funding source!

**A CALL FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE
BY HENRY PATTON, CHAIR, MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

Now more than ever it is important that internists band together and speak with one voice. Despite the recent government attempt to cut Medicare reimbursement, the ACP lobbied successfully to replace the 4.4 percent Medicare fee reductions with a 1.6 percent increase. The ACP is also negotiating with the American Board of Internal Medicine to reduce the burden of time and cost in the recertification process, as well as making it more relevant to clinical practice. The ACP continues to offer the best opportunities for continuing medical education, holding excellent meetings and providing prestigious publications such as the Annals of Internal Medicine and the Medical Knowledge Self-assessment Program (MKSAP).

It is imperative that every internist in Georgia join the ACP. Research has indicated that members of organizations recruited through social networks and personal conversations are more likely to be committed to the organization than members recruited through direct mail campaigns. Once they join, we think they will appreciate the benefits of membership and remain members.

In a nationwide effort to gain new members, ACP Headquarters initiated a Peer-to-Peer Recruitment Program. The program is designed as a member-get-a-member recruitment effort in which existing College members volunteer as recruiters and encourage their peers to join the ACP. The success of the Peer-to-Peer Recruitment Program depends on local participation within each Chapter.

As chair of the Membership Committee, I propose identifying regional membership directors to facilitate recruitment of internists who have yet to join the ACP and to assist with the advancement of current ACP members to the FACP level. The regional directors currently working on this project include:

Jean Chin	Athens	Vincent Nicolais and Kwon Choe	Columbus
Ali Rahimi and T Gongaware	Savannah	Shilpa Brown and Alan Roberts	Augusta
Joel Todino	Rome		

Shilpa is also working with the four medical schools and seven internal medicine residency programs in Georgia to increase Associate and student membership.

We are seeking additional volunteers to serve as regional directors as well as any chapter members willing to assist the membership committee. Everyone in the Georgia chapter must actively recruit new members. I also encourage the members who are Fellows of the College to encourage other eligible ACP members to apply for advancement to fellowship. Membership and Advancement to Fellowship applications are available on-line at www.acponline.org/college/membership/classes.htm?hp or from Nancy Brady.

Please volunteer! A small time investment can make an enormous difference to the chapter. Please let **Henry Patton** (e-mail: henrypatton@hotmail.com, phone: 770-787-6900) or **Nancy Brady** (email: nbrady@mail3.newnanutilities.org, phone: 770-252-1858) know if you will volunteer to help.

HEALTH INFORMATION PRESCRIPTION PROJECT

by **Jacqueline Fincher, Chair, Health and Public Policy Committee**

Statistics show six million Americans go online daily to search for information about health and disease. Recent research shows that nearly 70 percent of patients nationwide would pay serious attention to a website recommended by their physician, thus the “health information prescription.” Last year the Georgia and Iowa Chapters of ACP were asked to participate in the “Health Information Rx,” a pilot project between the ACP Foundation and the National Library of Medicine. This past March, participating ACP members in our state (over 300 of you) received customized prescriptions pads (as well as other office materials) used to direct patients to the National Library of Medicine’s consumer health website, www.MedlinePlus.gov, proclaimed by Consumer Reports as “the best place to find health information on the web.”

The consumer friendly website has information on more than 600 health topics, with information on symptoms, diagnosis and treatment, current news stories, research studies, clinical trials, helpful graphics and even video tutorials. There is also detailed helpful information on thousands of over-the-counter and prescription drugs, as well as listings of physicians, dentists, and health facilities organized by zip code. With the click of a button the whole website is available in Spanish.

The pilot project was launched in our state at a press conference in Atlanta, starring our own Dr. Joe Stubbs and his patient, Lt. Governor Mark Taylor. Many other national and state officials were present and spoke, including Dr. Sara Walker, ACP President; Dr. Whitney Addington, ACP Foundation Chairman; Dr. Donald Lindberg, Director of the NLM; Dr. Louis Sullivan; and numerous other physicians and librarians. Dr. Jacqueline Fincher presented the project to the Georgia Public Library Service’s state convention in April. She was met with great excitement by the public librarians, who were eager to work with participating physicians to promote the project in their communities.

The pilot project is coming to a close, but the program is being launched nationally next year to all physicians. The customized kits are still available for internists in our state. If you are interested in having your own customized office kit and prescription pads contact Jean Krause at the ACP Foundation, (JKrause@mail.acponline.org).

If you haven’t already, check out www.MedlinePlus.gov. It is a fantastic website, and especially good to use for giving talks to the lay public!!

2003 ACP LEADERSHIP DAY AND CHAPTER ADVOCACY

by **Jacqueline Fincher, Chair, Health and Public Policy Committee**

Lobbying Congress in our nation's capital on behalf of principles and issues you believe is a great rite of citizenship. Everyone should do it at least once. When you are in Washington, DC, you always get a dichotomous sense of majesty and manipulation, awe and disgust, influence and powerlessness that seems to operate our great republic. Leadership Day, May 13-14, 2003 was no disappointment in this regard.

Our Georgia Chapter representatives to Washington, DC were our Governor, Dr. Rhee Fincher, Augusta; Dr. Ric Fullerton, Atlanta; Dr. Glenn Carter, Hinesville; Dr. Titi George, Albany; Dr. B. Indrakrishnan, Riverdale; and Dr. Jacqueline Fincher, Thomson. Dr. Munsey S. Wheby, President of ACP, along with Robert Doherty, ACP Senior Vice President of Governmental Affairs and Public Policy, gave us an overview of the current political environment in Washington and in-depth briefing on specific issues and legislation before the Congress.

We met with our Georgia legislators including Representatives Phil Gingrey, MD; Max Burns; and Denise Majette. We also met with legislative aids for Representatives Charlie Norwood and Sanford Bishop and for Senators Zell Miller and Saxby Chambliss. Specifically the priority issues we addressed with them were:

1. Medical malpractice reform, encouraging the Senate to pass legislation similar to the House-passed “HEALTH ACT of 2003,” which includes a \$250,000 cap on non-economic damages, a sliding scale contingency fee on attorneys, proportionate liability, limits on punitive damages, etc. This bill, SB 11, did not pass.

2. Medicare fee schedule and regulatory relief, encouraging them to change the update formula, and to enact legislation to mandate the 2.5% increase for 2004 recommended by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC). Also encouraging Congress to pass HR 810, and the Senate to introduce a similar bill that includes provisions to improve carrier performance, reform the audit process, pilot-testing of alternatives to excessive documentation, etc.

3. Medicare modernization and prescription benefit, expressing our concerns on cost of an “all inclusive” bill and pushing for availability to the elderly who are in need, not wealthy seniors.

Big problem here; since our visit items 3 and 4 have been bundled with the \$400 billion dollar prescription benefit for ALL seniors into one bill in the Senate (SB 1) and House (HB 1) and passed both houses (76 - 21 in the Senate) and (216 - 215 in House). These bills are being debated NOW.

4. Expansion of health insurance for the uninsured (ACP's 7 year plan) supporting Senator Bingaman's legislation in the Senate, finding a Representative in the House to produce a companion bill, which as of this writing, has just been done! These bills are HB 2402 and SB 1030. Senator Joseph Lieberman has just included many of the ACP recommendations in his presidential platform to address healthcare coverage for all.



Pictured left to right: Dr. Ric Fullerton, Dr. Titi George, Representative Denise Majette, Dr. Jacqueline Fincher, Dr. Glenn Carter, Dr. B. Indrakrishnan



Pictured left to right: Dr. Ric Fullerton, Dr. Jacqueline Fincher, Representative Phil Gringrey, Dr. Glenn Carter, ACP legislative staff member, Dr. B. Indrakrishnan, Dr. Titi George



Pictured left to right: Dr. Glenn Carter, Dr. Jacqueline Fincher, Representative Max Burns

Politics as Usual?

Like it or not, state and federal politicians deeply affect our daily practice and care of our patients. They hear from lawyers and business people daily, who boast major power and influence in Atlanta and Washington, DC. Is there any wonder why health care is so poorly handled by government?

What Can (and Should) You Do?

We cannot continue to sit idly by while politicians decide our fate. They must hear from us! The good news is action is easy by e-mail!!

ON FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Go to www.acponline.org/advocacy and click on "Legislative Action Center." The immediately impending important legislation is listed. You can send an already written e-mail regarding the issue to your Representative or Senator. It will be sent to the correct person based on your address and zip code. You can also add your own closing with any personal remarks or stories. To send an e-mail takes all of one minute.

ON STATE LEGISLATION

a. Go to www.mag.org, which is the Medical Association of Georgia's website, which updates you on key state legislation. You can also send your state legislators pre-written e-mails just with your address and zip code. Again, this takes one minute.

b. Come to the state Legislative Day for Primary Care Physicians, tentatively set for **Wednesday, March 10, 2004**. Take the first step; put it on your calendar NOW!

Know and communicate with your legislators regularly! I can't emphasize it enough! Griping in the doctor's lounge to your colleagues doesn't help! Please take two minutes to go to these websites and send e-mails monthly. The e-mails might actually help. It wouldn't hurt to send your favorite politician a donation. They all seem to listen better with money. How much is your practice worth to you??

I would appreciate knowing any action you are personally taking and always any input you may have on how our chapter can improve our political stance in the state and in Washington, DC. My e-mail address is jwfincher@compuserve.com.

CIVIL JUSTICE REFORM IN GEORGIA: WHERE DO WE STAND

by **Jacqueline W. Fincher, Chair, Health and Public Policy Committee**

Excerpts from the Medical Association of Georgia's "Boot Camp for Physician Warriors" conducted at Hilton Head, SC, August, 2003.

Georgia physicians' ability to provide quality medical care is being compromised by a broken medical liability legal system. Escalating jury verdicts are a disease in our society because they hinder patients' ability to get accessible, affordable health care and force physicians to make legal decisions instead of clinical decisions. Georgia is facing a potential serious access to care issue. Patients will not be able to get the care they need and deserve without medical liability reform.

Increases in medical malpractice premiums are not the result of poor investments on the part of insurers. By law, insurance companies can only invest up to 25% of investment income in the stock market. On average, 90% of their assets are in U.S. Treasury and Corporate bonds. MAG Mutual, the state's largest malpractice insurer invests only 6% in the stock market.

The medical liability crisis is not caused by increases in medical errors and "bad doctors". The often cited Institute of Medicine report stresses that the majority of medical errors do not result from individual recklessness, but from basic flaws in the ways the health system is organized. A recent Harvard study shows no correlation between medical liability award payments and physician negligence. Georgia has the 11th highest jury awards in the nation, while being 38th in total number of physicians in the state. According to MAG Mutual, less than 1.5% of all insured physicians had even one claim paid in the 1990s.

Georgia Senate Bill 133, "Common Sense Civil Justice Reform Act of 2003" is the bill that has the critical tort reform elements needed for real change in the present system. A watered down "trial lawyer's substitute," which did NOT contain a cap on non-economic damages, is what came out of the Senate Judiciary Committee to the Senate floor in this past legislative session. The Senate Republican Caucus opposed any floor amendments that would have restored the original elements of SB133. The very watered down, meaningless bill is what was sent to the House Judiciary Committee for consideration. This bill never saw the light

of day with Chairman Tom Bordeaux, a trial lawyer, in charge of its fate in the House.

What Needs to Happen? The Senate needs to pass the original bill, SB 133 in its entirety, to include the \$250,000 cap on non-economic damages, and send it on to the House, where Lt. Governor Mark Taylor could put it in any committee except the House Judiciary Committee. This bill directly affects whether Georgia's citizens will have access to affordable healthcare. This issue is a Patient Access Issue, not a doctor reimbursement issue. Legislators must understand these basic facts.

What Can You Do?

1. Go to the Medical Association of Georgia's website at www.mag.org where you can learn and do a whole lot more, including how to contact your legislator, sample letters, important facts you and they need to know, etc.
2. Join MAG; they are the most powerful advocacy group for all Georgia physicians.
3. Write, meet, and talk with your State Senators this fall. They have more time to listen to you and become more educated on this subject now while they are not in session.
4. Get your local hospital to help host a meeting between physicians and local legislators this fall, so all of you can put names to faces.
5. Write and tell your legislators your personal stories; how this issue is affecting your practice. Stories are one of the most influential tools you can use. (Add a check, and you will really have their attention.)
6. Join us for the Rally at the Capitol in January.
7. Join us for the ACP State Legislative Day in March, where we will meet our legislators with our colleagues from the Georgia Academy of Family Practice and the Georgia Academy of Pediatrics.
8. Talk to your staff and your patients about the issue.
9. Write a letter to the editor.
10. **DO SOMETHING!!!!** We must create an ongoing dialogue year round with these legislators who are making the laws that will affect the healthcare of every citizen in Georgia.

Contact me for more information or to share your stories from your practice at jwfincher@compuserve.com.

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

2004 Annual Chapter Meeting: Savannah Hyatt, Savannah, GA
Fundamental Critical Care Support (FCCS) course: March 24-26, 2004
Annual Chapter Scientific meeting: March 26-28, 2004

2004 Leadership Day at the Georgia State Capitol: March 10, 2004

2004 Literary Retreat: Amicolola Falls, Georgia: March 12-14, 2004

2004 Annual National Meeting: New Orleans, LA: April 22-24, 2004

You Are Invited to the Fourth Annual Literary Retreat by Evan Weisman, Chair, Literary Retreat

Evan Weisman, MD, FACP, has announced the Fourth Annual Literary Retreat sponsored by the Georgia Chapter of the ACP will be held March 12-14, 2004 at the beautiful Amicolola Falls State Lodge. You and your spouse or guest are cordially invited and encouraged to attend.

Previous retreat attendees have given “rave reviews” with respect to the literary discussions, location, and collegiality of the group. This year’s topic, “Plague and Community”, is remarkably timely in light of emerging diseases and their impact on global health. The books that will form the basis for the discussion address human communities affected by plague or other calamitous outbreaks and how such tragedies stimulate identification of common bonds and bring diverse communities of human beings together. Albert Camus’ *The Plague* will be one of the books discussed.

The retreat is not only an opportunity to participate in engaging literary discussion with people who share common interests, enjoy a beautiful part of the state, and meet new friends but also provides ten CME credits. You do not need to be an avid reader or have expertise in literary discussion to enjoy and benefit from this retreat. Please give it a try! If you do, I predict you will want to return.

A brochure and registration materials will be sent to all state ACP members and will be posted on the chapter website www.acponline.org/chapters/ga/. The registration fee of \$130.00 per couple includes one set of reading materials and complimentary Saturday morning breakfast. Dinner and lodging (special group rate \$75.00 pr night) are not included in the registration fee, but are tax deductible.

Mark your calendar for the Fourth Annual Literary Retreat

Date: **March 12-14, 2003**
Location: **Amicalola Falls State Lodge**