

March 2009

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It seems that every time I sit down to write one of these messages we seem to be waiting for another "shoe" to drop. Last summer it was whether the scheduled cut in Medicare payments could be blocked and now it is who will be President Obama's Secretary of Health and Human Services and what are the administration's plans for health care reform and its implications for Internal Medicine.

We have every reason to be hopeful that there will be more emphasis (with higher payments, better organization, and fewer hassles) for those things that Internists do best. The College is in continual communication with the new Administration and Congress concerning our recommendations. Those of us who were able to attend the New Mexico Medical Society Special House of Delegates Meeting in December heard from then President-Elect Obama's Health Care Fellow. Although he was careful not to give specifics and definite proposals, the scope and detail of the new Administration's grasp and understanding of what true reform means is right in line with that of the ACP.

Our NMACP Chapter helped sponsor the meeting because not only were our colleagues from other specialties exposed to these concepts (some for the first time), but the Medical Society brought from North Carolina, a physician leader in that state's Medicaid Patient Centered Medical Home program. He discussed their success in improvement in health outcomes as well as significant cost savings that they are achieving. He helped dispel, I hope, some of the concerns that some of our surgical colleagues had (as well as some sub-specialty internists) that the shift in priorities to Primary Care would be at the expense of those of us who are also critical to the care of our patients. It was pointed out that if Primary Care continues to collapse; it places our whole health system in peril.

Another "shoe" that is hanging is being played out during the current sixty-day session of our State Legislature. This is the continued viability of our Medical Malpractice Act and the continued ability of many of us to practice in New Mexico. I have forwarded emails to you from the Medical Society concerning the need to contact our legislators to oppose opening the Act for revision. I hope you have done so. For even if we are not directly covered by the Act, I am sure that you are well aware of the precarious state of access to medical care in our state. Anything that diminishes the ability of some of us to practice affects all of us and our patients.

I continue to be hopeful that the "outcomes" of our efforts will be positive. This is largely because of the leadership provided by two outstanding organizations- the American College of Physicians and the New Mexico Medical Society. If you are not members of either, I urge you to join and I strongly encourage each of us to get into the "trenches". If you cannot attend Leadership Day in Washington (May 19-20, 2009), or directly meet with our Federal and State elected officials at least donate to our Political Action Committees (ACP Services and NEMPAC). Our membership in these organizations and donations to the PACs are critical to our communities and our patients' future.

On another note, our Annual Scientific Meeting will be held Friday and Saturday (October 16-17, 2009) in Albuquerque. We have decided not to have a Thursday evening program, but to extend the meeting two hours on Saturday. It was difficult for many of our members, especially those "out of town", to get away in time for the Thursday evening session. (We will also save on expenses.)

Our NM Chapter Council will meet in March to help me prepare for the next Board of Governors' Meeting. We are welcoming several new members of the Council.

I hope to see many of you at the ACP Annual Meeting in Philadelphia.

Regards,
Mike

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