

Rhode Island Chapter GOVERNOR'S NEWSLETTER

ACP
AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | Doctors for Adults

Spring 2003

Yul D. Ejnes, MD, FACP
Governor, Rhode Island Chapter

From the Governor's Desk...

Times like these challenge a newsletter editor. In the three or four weeks that will pass between my writing this column and your reading it on paper, much of what I write may no longer be accurate, or if it is, no longer "news." (Of course, if you read this online within days of publication, that won't be the case.) This is not unlike what our local weatherpeople go through before they forecast a storm, except you won't end up knee deep in unexpected snow from reading this newsletter. For example, unless you have this in your hands before Annual Session, the name of our organization will be incorrect – it changes to "American College of Physicians" in April. There are other "works in progress" that conspire to make me look wrong, but I'll do my best to anticipate their outcome. When all of us get our newsletters electronically, none of this will matter, but that time is years away. Right now, we can reach about 65% of our members by either e-mail or fax, and half of them by e-mail. Eliminating paper newsletters sent by mail and replacing them with electronic newsletters will save ACP-ASIM thousands of dollars and will provide members with a more up-to-date publication. In order to achieve this goal, we need your e-mail addresses (I encourage you to send in the response form in this newsletter with your contact information).

The Awakening of a Sleeping Giant – that's the title that I would give to the past six months for the local and national medical profession. As a result of insults from many directions, physicians are beginning to do what they should have done years ago, and that is to fight for the right to practice medicine as it was intended to be practiced, with the relationship between a patient and his or her physician at the center instead of as an afterthought. In the past couple of months, physicians have contacted their members of Congress and prevented further Medicare payment cuts. They protested Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island's plans to reduce reimbursement and the insurer backed off. They converged by the hundreds on the State House to let the Governor, the General Assembly, and the public know that the quality of care in Rhode Island is under attack by rising practice expenses, inadequate reimbursement, and a hostile tort system. I congratulate all of you who have participated in these activities. However, too much success can spoil a good movement. We have much catching up to do, and our work will take years to complete. So keep writing, calling, marching, and making your feelings known. Also, please get your less motivated colleagues to join us in the effort.

You may be surprised and hopefully reassured that not all is gloomy in our professional world. There are initiatives in progress that will bring electronic prescribing to our offices, help us take better care of our chronically ill patients, and develop partnerships between physicians and insurers that will replace the traditional methods of addressing issues of quality and cost (i.e., "hassle"). More about that later in this newsletter (how's that for a teaser?).

Another reason to not lose hope is your ACP-ASIM Chapter's continuing commitment to providing quality CME opportunities. Our Chapter Regional Meeting on April 23, 2003 at the Radisson Airport Hotel will feature a discussion on the future of internal medicine and a demonstration of an exciting resource that is available to all ACP-ASIM members. A full program is available on Page 4 and on the chapter website. At our

regional meeting, you will hear from our College Representative, an old friend of Rhode Island internists, Cecil Wilson, MD, FACP, the current Chair of the Board of Regents. Cecil was our Assigned Trustee for the RISIM prior to the merger and has been a constant source of support and good counsel for me over the years. Once again, the meeting will highlight the accomplishments of our Associates and Medical Student members, who will display abstracts in a poster session. Six of the Associates will present their work during the formal program.

This year's regional meeting has a couple of twists. First is the schedule. In order to facilitate attendance, we compressed the meeting from a one evening-one full day event to a one day meeting that begins at 12:30 pm with a reception and concludes with the poster session over hearty hors d'oeuvres in the evening. This will allow attendees to get their work done in the morning so they can attend the entire program. The second change is that prizes will be awarded to the oral presenters this year. Our judges will include Dr. Wilson and Steven Schoenbaum, MD, MPH, one of our invited speakers. Our Education Subcommittee, led by James Hennessey, MD, FACP hopes that the changes generate interest in the meeting. Please let us know what you think.

The Spring newsletter features what I hope will be a regular feature, an essay by Ed Iannuccilli. You may have read Ed's work in the Providence Journal and I'm thrilled that he agreed to write something for this newsletter. I encourage other members to contribute articles, essays, and commentaries to the newsletter (I need the help!).

Finally, a few words about the West Warwick fire. A tragedy such as that one reminds us of how small our community is. What we lack in size we more than make up for in spirit, as evidenced by the outpouring of support for the victims and their families. To those who suffered losses in the fire, our heartfelt condolences. To those who cared for the victims and their families and continue to do so, our thanks.

Stay safe and healthy,

Yul D. Ejnes, MD, FACP
Governor, RI Chapter ACP-ASIM

RI Chapter Submits Board of Governor Resolutions

The Rhode Island Chapter submitted two resolutions for the spring Board of Governors meeting, scheduled for April 1 and 2 in San Diego.

The first deals with creation of "emeritus" status for ABIM certification. Executive Council member Rob Crausman, MD, FACP, proposed this, and the following resolution was drafted.

Emeritus ABIM Certification (Co-sponsored by Alaska, Connecticut, Florida and Rhode Island Chapters)

WHEREAS, ACP-ASIM supports the concepts of recertification and lifelong learning; and

WHEREAS, one of the ACP-ASIM Goals is "To recognize individual excellence and distinguished contributions to internal medicine"; and

WHEREAS, the American Board of Internal Medicine's Continuous Professional Development program provides no specific recognition following retirement and once board certification expires for board certified internists who have maintained board certification throughout their careers; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Regents advocate for the creation of an "emeritus" status by the ABIM to recognize the lifetime achievement of internal medicine specialists who have maintained board certification through periodic recertification throughout their clinically active professional lives; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Board of Regents recommend that this new “emeritus” status be granted upon request by the physician at retirement, or after three successful recertifications.

The second resolution was inspired by a letter to the Providence Journal by Leonard Mermel, DO, FACP, who wrote about his daughter’s experience after she ate a meal that, unbeknownst to her, contained peanuts. She is peanut allergic. Len administered medication and his daughter did OK, fortunately.

Disclosure of Food Allergens by Restaurants
(Co-sponsored by Alaska, Connecticut and Rhode Island Chapters)

WHEREAS, one of ACP-ASIM’s goals is to advocate responsible public policy relating to health care for the benefit of the public and our patients; and

WHEREAS, according to a National Institutes of Health Fact Sheet (www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/allergystat.htm), peanut or tree nut allergies affect approximately 3 million Americans, and approximately 100 Americans, usually children, die annually from food-induced anaphylaxis; and

WHEREAS individuals at risk for food-induced anaphylaxis are often unaware of the presence of nuts or nut derivatives in the food that they purchase in restaurants; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Regents support legislation requiring restaurants to identify on their menus food items that contain nuts.

Was It Lymphoma?

Edward A. Iannuccilli, MD, FACP

I often wonder why I decided to become a physician. I guess it started some years ago. I remember lying in the stark white Providence Homeopathic Hospital, now the Roger Williams, when I was seven years old. I had huge neck glands and a high fever. My physician, “Dr. D.” came to see me, accompanied by his white clad assistant, probably a resident in training. “Dr. D.” was dressed in a suit. (My Uncle Carl never liked

the doctor because he carried his lunch in oil stained bag, quite unbecoming of a professional, he thought). I recall the doctor, after a prolonged examination of those large glands for what seemed to be the one hundredth time, saying to the resident, “This boy has lymphoma; I think we should send him to Boston”. Although not really understanding, I knew I was confused and very frightened.

My father visited me after work that evening and asked how I was feeling. I told him of the morning’s conversation between the physicians, and how I was frightened. Boston seemed so far away. Dad had a strange way of just staring for long periods of time when he was worried, and that look frightened me even more. It was not the first, or the last, time I saw that look, and it always made me uneasy. This time he did more than just stare. He said, “We’re getting out of here and I am taking you to see Dr. Fratantuono”. That very evening, a Monday, when the doctor had office hours, we went to see Dr. “Frat”, as his patients called him, who examined those large lumps in my neck, looked in my throat, and said to my Dad, “Peter, this boy has tonsillitis. We can remove his tonsils in the morning and he should be fine.”

I returned to that same hospital the next morning and I remember being wheeled on a stretcher along the white tiled corridors to the operating room, another stark square area. All around me was white; the masks, the ceiling, the doctors’ gowns, and the nurses’ uniforms. I was lying face up on a hard, cold metal table under a bright spotlight, when a doctor placed a white cone-shaped mask covered by a white cloth over my face, I was told to count to ten. The last thing I remember after the smell (of ether) and the immediacy of white was my screaming.

I woke up at home, in my familiar third floor bedroom, with a terribly sore throat. I cried – a lot. And then came the vomiting. Chunks of something, this time a color other than white – red, my blood! My mother scurried about while my father resumed his doleful, concerned stare, the look I hated. It meant something was wrong. He again called Dr. “Frat” who made the house call and with confidence and comfort to all, resolved the problem. The bleeding and my crying stopped. My parents were reassured, and I was

well.

Dr. "Frat" became the hero of our family. For many years thereafter, I thought he had saved my life, and that he surely was *my* hero. At a later time, When I was in junior high school, I dedicated my career book, "On Being a Doctor" to him. But now, as I look back, I realize that it was even more my Dad, with his wise and caring "look", his good judgment and swift action that once again made sure that the right thing was done for his beloved family. If being a wonderful father and great role model for his children is being a hero, then my Dad was, and still is, mine.

Edward Iannucilli is Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Rhode Island Hospital and Past Governor of the RI Chapter of ACP.

Wanted: New Members

There are still a couple of hundred internists in RI who are not members of ACP-ASIM. Some of them are in the offices down the hall from you. With the challenges that internists in RI face, the voice of an organization such as ACP-ASIM is more important than ever. The dollar value of the averted Medicare and

Blue Cross Cuts more than pays for a year's dues.

The best way to convince a non-member to join ACP-ASIM is for a current member to ask him to do so. If you would like to help us with this, the College has "Peer-to-Peer" membership enrollment kits that contain an application and

Scientific Program and Special Events

Revitalization of Internal Medicine

Wednesday, April 23, 2003

12:30 p.m. Registration
Luncheon Buffet

1:00 Welcoming Remarks and
Business Meeting
Yul D. Ejnes, MD, FACP,
Governor

1:15 College Update
Cecil B. Wilson, MD, FACP,
Immediate Past Chair, Board
of Regents

REVITALIZATION OF INTERNAL MEDICINE— IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS

Moderator: James V. Hennessey, MD,
FACP

1:30 Enhancing the Medical
Student Experience
Mark J. Fagan, MD, Member

2:00 Residencies of the
21st Century
Stephen C. Schoenbaum,
MD, FACP

2:30 The Future of the
Practicing Internist
Cecil B. Wilson, MD, FACP
Chair, Board of Regents

3:00 Demonstration—Physicians'
Information Education
Resource (PIER)
Karen A. Rosene-Montella, MD,
FACP

3:45 Presentation—
*Irving Addison Beck
Memorial Laureate Award*

4:00 Refreshment Break
Visit exhibits and College
display

4:30 Oral Presentations—Abstract
Forum Winners (6)

Moderator: Robert B. Crausman, MD, FACP

6:00 Break
Visit exhibits and College display

6:30–
8:30 Reception, Abstract Viewing,
Oral Presenter Awards

brochures on ACP-ASIM membership. Please contact Nancy Baker-Hobin (nbaker4@cox.net) for more information.

Quality Partners of Rhode Island forms Physicians Quality Network

Quality Partners of Rhode Island (formerly Rhode Island Quality Partners), has created a system designed to improve the quality of diabetes care, mammography use, and immunization rates in the outpatient setting. Called the Physicians Quality Network, this group of fifteen physicians from across Rhode Island is working with Quality Partners to develop strategies and tools that will help practicing physicians to improve the care that they deliver in the three areas. The group will also help Quality Partners recruit physicians to participate in the program. Most of the participants will be primary care physicians. For additional information, contact Deirdre Gifford, MD, MPH at dgifford.ripro@sdps.org. The Quality Partners web site is www.riqualitypartners.org

RI Quality Institute Brings Stakeholders to the Table

Wouldn't it be nice if the executives of the major hospitals, insurance companies, businesses, chambers of commerce, and representatives of the medical profession, state government, universities, and pharmacies could meet regularly to improve the quality of health care in Rhode Island? Sound like a fantasy? What if I told you that such a group exists and meets monthly? For over a year, the Rhode Island Quality Institute (www.riqi.org) has worked on projects designed to improve the quality and safety of care delivered to patients in Rhode Island. The Institute, formed following the attempted Lifespan-Care New England merger, was championed by then-Attorney General Sheldon Whitehouse, who convened a group of health care stakeholders unaccustomed to working together for the purpose of creating an organization that would allow them to collaborate in ways never before imagined. (A complete list of QI members is available at www.riqi.org)

For its first projects, the QI selected the electronic intensive care unit, electronic prescribing, and evidence-based care through the RAND Corporation's National Quality Initiative. The electronic prescribing project, a collaboration with SureScripts, is of particular interest to practicing internists. SureScripts is a company owned by the national organizations of the chain and independent pharmacies. SureScripts provides electronic connectivity between doctors' offices and pharmacies. The goals of the project are to improve patient safety, reduce physician overhead costs, and increase practice efficiency. Most of you received a letter about this in February and by the time you receive the paper version of the newsletter, some of you may be involved in beta testing the system. A Professional Input Team that includes members of the Chapter is meeting regularly with representatives of SureScripts to make sure that the e-prescribing tools are compatible with the workflow of the typical physician's office and existing electronic systems.

Details of the electronic prescribing project are available on the Quality Institute web site.

IMG Subcommittee Update *Munawar Azam, MBBS, Chairman*

The IMG Council has been very busy in the last few months. As you may have heard, the Immigration and Naturalization Service has put in place registration requirements for nationals of certain countries as an antiterrorism measure. A large number of IMG physicians in Rhode Island have also been affected. There has been a lot of resentment against this measure and anxiety too as hundreds of people have been arrested on minor charges when they showed up to register in other states.

The good news is that a lot of these physicians contacted me of their own accord showing that the subcommittee is starting to be recognized as a forum that can address IMG concerns. In fact a lot of physicians who are non internists have also been calling me.

The Council first discussed matters with an immigration lawyer. We then proactively tried to contact as many affected physicians as we could

and asked them to make sure they register as not doing so would be illegal. We also provided them with names of lawyers who could provide more help and information. The subcommittee then went on to monitor the registration process in RI. We interviewed a number of people who went through the process and I am happy to report that the process has gone relatively smoothly in RI and people have not encountered problems or harassment. I was also able to get a few physicians who had gone through the registration process early to act as a resource that others could call with questions.

All in all we were able to allay a lot of anxiety and happily there were no major problems with the process here in RI.

New Fellows Elected

The Board of Regents elected the following RI Chapter members to ACP-ASIM Fellowship in January:

Melver L. Anderson III, MD - Providence
Frank Merlino, MD - Warwick

We salute the new fellows and encourage members to consider advancement to fellowship.

All candidates for Fellowship who want to be considered at the November 2003 Credentials Subcommittee meeting must submit Fellowship proposals to ACP-ASIM's Member Records Section before June 1, 2003. Supporting letters from two current ACP-ASIM Masters or Fellows and current curricula vitae must accompany the proposals, which staff will then forward to the appropriate ACP-ASIM Governors.

For an advancement to Fellowship inquiry kit, contact the Customer Service Department at 800-523-1546, ext. 2600, or 215-351-2600 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST), or download one in Adobe Acrobat format at www.acponline.org/college/membership/fellowpro.pdf. For more information, contact Mariana Hotea at 800-523-1546, ext. 2709.

Radiology Initiative Update

Representatives of the medical specialty societies, RIMS, and BlueCHIP continue to work on developing decision support tools for physicians who are ordering CT, MRI, and nuclear scans. Called the "Radiology Initiative," the project was launched last year as an alternative to preauthorization requirements for these tests. By the time that you read this newsletter, a set of guidelines adapted from a set produced by National Imaging Associates should be available on the Internet for use by Rhode Island physicians to help them decide which imaging study is appropriate and when it should be ordered. Other resources, including CME programs, additional guidelines, and other educational materials, will be made available as well. The Radiology Initiative is an effort to address the issues of quality improvement and effective use of resources in a collaborative manner.

Leadership Day 2003

Tuesday, May 13 and Wednesday, May 14 are the dates of the eleventh annual ACP-ASIM Leadership Day, to be held at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel in Washington, DC. Briefings on the issues from ACP-ASIM staff as well as political leaders will be held on Tuesday and congressional visits on Wednesday. This year, as it has done for the past few years, the Rhode Island Chapter will send a delegation to meet with Senators Reed and Chafee and Representatives Kennedy and Langevin.

Issues on the agenda include Medicare reform, medical liability and access to care.

With airfares to the DC area relatively inexpensive via Baltimore-Washington airport, the Chapter can afford to send a few more representatives to Leadership Day. Frequent flights to BWI make it possible to fly down Wednesday morning and return in the evening if time away from home is a problem. If you would like to join our delegation on Leadership Day, please contact me at [Yul Ejnes@brown.edu](mailto:Yul_Ejnes@brown.edu).

Rhode Island Chapter of ACP-ASIM Executive Council

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