

Rhode Island Medical Society Council

Meeting of Monday, October 20, 2008

Meeting Highlights

PREAUTHORIZATION FOR IMAGING The Rhode Island Chapter of the American College of Cardiology reports that discussions continue with BCBSRI and its vendor, MedSolutions, regarding appropriate use of echocardiography and nuclear cardiac imaging. The national ACC and the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology are weighing in on the Rhode Island discussion from a national perspective. Differences between the national ACC and the ASNC have slowed progress toward a resolution of the issues raised by the Rhode Island ACC.

In the continued absence of a resolution, cardiac imaging studies are being delayed for many Rhode Island patients. Therefore, the RI ACC will seek a temporary agreement with MedSolutions until all parties can reach consensus.

RIMS continues to support the cardiologists' concerns in RIMS' own regular meetings with BCBSRI. RIMS has welcomed demonstrations of flexibility on the part of the insurer and its vendor (e.g., the initial grace period, concessions to radiology and oncology, and the current willingness to engage issues with cardiology).

Preauthorization requirements (potentially imposed by BCBSRI for imaging have been an active concern of RIMS since 2001. The issue has been a topic of every RIMS Council and Executive Committee meeting of the past 24 months.

PROVIDER TAXES The multi-step process of challenging the gross receipts taxes enacted by the RI General Assembly in June 2007 is proceeding on budget and generally on schedule.

For the past six weeks RIMS has been waiting for the Hearing Officer for the Division of Taxation to process a final denial. That denial, once issued, will open the door for RIMS to initiate litigation against the state.

At its July 28 meeting, the RIMS Council reconfirmed its authorization for the RIMS Treasurer to proceed to suit. While expenses to date align with projections, a renewed round of fundraising has become necessary and is currently underway.

RIMS' legislative and judicial challenges to the taxes have already been successful to the extent that the 2009 state budget does not increase or broaden the existing provider taxes.

PRIMARY CARE Primary Care Leadership Council, which was formed in 2006, has proposed that RIMS and the PCLC explore mutual interests in coming together organizationally. The RIMS Executive Committee is receptive to this proposal. Further discussions are planned, and recommendations to the Council will be forthcoming.

RI's APPLICATION TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR A "GLOBAL WAIVER" UNDER MEDICAID Dr. Andrew Snyder delivered a detailed presentation on the state's proposal, which was submitted to the federal government in August, for Rhode Island to forgo federal matching Medicaid funds (currently 53% from the federal

side) for a period of 5 years in return for a federal block grant and a largely free hand to restructure Rhode Island Medicaid.

The fate of the Rhode Island waiver application rests in the hands of CMS. U.S. Senators Baucus and Rockefeller and the entire Rhode Island Congressional Delegation oppose the waiver plan. In recent weeks the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* have editorialized against the Rhode Island waiver proposal.

Meanwhile, the State of Rhode Island is counting on the waiver to save the state 67 million dollars in the current fiscal year that began July 1, 2008.

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS A vacancy has developed at Vice President.

Because President-Elect Snyder is relocating out of state, Dr. Vera DePalo, as Vice President, automatically ascends to the position of President-Elect.

The Council will elect a new RIMS Vice President at the December 1 meeting. RIMS President Diane R. Siedlecki, MD, charged members of the Council to help identify and recruit qualified and willing candidates for VP.

Unrelated to the vacancy at VP, the Executive Committee, at the direction of the Council, is considering potential changes in RIMS' procedures for nominations and elections. The Committee expects to propose Bylaws amendments to the Council on December 1.

2009 GENERAL ASSEMBLY The Public Laws Committee will meet December 10. Specialty societies are asked to attend and to share any legislative initiatives they contemplate.

All specialties are invited to submit ideas for inclusion on RIMS' legislative agenda for the 2009 session.

RIMPAC Council members should encourage their constituents to support RIMPAC and vote on November 4. Physicians let themselves and their patients down when they fail to participate in representative numbers in the electoral and political process.

MEMBERSHIP IS UP Rhode Island Medical Society membership has increased by 13.7% in the past 11 months. AMA membership in Rhode Island is also up significantly this year.

The Council voted to maintain the current RIMS membership dues structure without increase or other change through 2009.

ELECTION OF 2008/09 RIMS FOUNDATION TRUSTEES The Council voted to elect Diane Siedlecki, MD; Jerald Fingerut, MD; Kathleen Fitzgerald, MD; Barry Wall, MD; and Nick Tsiongas, MD, MPH, to the Board of Trustees of the RIMS Foundation.

UPCOMING EVENTS On December 4 RIMS will host a CME-bearing AMA program at RIMS to help physicians address patients' concerns about vaccine safety. On December 10 at RIMS, Dr. Peter Hollmann will present on CPT changes for 2009. Early in 2009 (TBA), consultant Frank Cohen will present again (by popular demand) on enhancing practice revenue.

