

December 2020 Newsletter

FROM THE GOVERNOR

“If 2020 is telling us anything...It’s telling us enjoy the moments we have and don’t take any day, anything, or anyone for granted.”

Anonymous



Dear Colleagues,

The final month of 2020 is finally here. If I am honest, I have become superstitious thinking about the new year that is almost upon us. It may be wishful thinking or simply pandemic fatigue, but nonetheless I feel a hope with the turn to 2021. COVID-19 has persisted, but so has the human spirit. We are up against a novel virus, but we also created a vaccine through a novel technology. We have suffered through unspeakable tragedies, but we have found ways to spread kindness without physical contact. We have exhausted ourselves from work hours, but we have recouped at home with intimate family time mirroring a life decades in the past.

The holiday season can bring joy but also a be reminder of those we have lost. This year will be especially poignant given what the year has brought us thus far. Let us reach out to those around us, continue to spread hope in whatever small manner we can, and usher in 2021 together.

Pay It Forward and Spread Holiday Cheer

I have listed some local charities for those interested in a different idea for holiday giving. I have some reliable organizations separated by category.

Local company supporting locals in need

- Max Cares Foundation - donate to 'Roasts for the Holidays':
<https://www.maxcaresfoundation.org/donations/max-cares-donation/>

Donate to veterans

- Gary Sinise Foundation - <https://www.garysinisefoundation.org>
- Disabled American Veterans Charity (DAV) - <http://www.dav.org>

Animals

- CT Humane Society - <http://www.cthumane.org>
- SPCA of CT - <http://www.spcact.org>
- The Animal Haven - <http://www.theanimalhavenct.org>

Free/low-cost medical clinics

- Malta House of Care Clinic Greater Hartford - <https://malthouseofcare.org/supporters/how-to-give/>
- Haven Free Clinic - <https://www.havenfreeclinic.com/donate>

Diversity Committee

Sujata Prasad, MD, member; Enrique Pacheco, MD, member; Amir Mohammad, MD , Chair; Naseema Merchant, MD, Chair

The committee launched its very first “Story-Telling Hour” on Thursday, October 15, 2020 as a lunch hour program. It was a virtual live event moderated by Dr. Sujata Prasad and Dr. Enrique Pacheco. The chapter solicited stories from its members and nonmembers during the summer of 2020. A panel of judges reviewed all the stories and 4 were selected for oral presentation to a live audience. The hour started out with Dr. Pacheco sharing the work and mission of the ACP CT chapter’s Diversity Committee followed by Dr. Prasad who introduced the story-telling hour and the need to bring stories to life with a wider audience. We had a diverse group of storytellers, from medical students to internists in primary care and to sub- specialists from across the state. The stories reflected beautifully on what diversity means to an individual and how diversity impacted the “tellers” in their personal lives. The event was well attended with 98 registered attendees.

We also held our 6th annual Women in Medicine Networking Breakfast. Since the entire annual meeting was virtual this year, the networking session was offered on day two of the annual meeting as a virtual event. The program was kicked off by local and national prominent attorney Nina Pirrotti, who delivered an excellent session on gender pay equality followed by small group discussions in zoom breakout rooms. A total of 50 women registered for the event. Participants particularly enjoyed the small zoom break out room discussions and the ability to further discuss this topic with women in all levels of their professional careers.

The chapter introduced a new award this year recognizing a physician for his/her work supporting diversity and inclusion. The inaugural recipient was Dr. Inginia Genao who is a faculty member in the Department of Medicine at Yale. She was recognized for her work

supporting and promoting inclusion and diversity within the Yale School of Medicine and beyond. Congratulations to Dr. Genao for this well-deserved award. Please send nominations for physicians who are making a difference in diversity throughout the state for the upcoming award year.

Looking ahead to 2021, we plan to partner with the Early Career Physicians yet again to organize a visa event and a financial planning workshop in the spring. We were unable to host our annual picnic this year due to the pandemic and while the ACP picnic 2021 is still on the table, we will need to assess the situation for safety closer to summer. The second story-telling hour will be organized next year together with the Women in Medicine networking breakfast as part of the annual meeting.

We welcome and appreciate ideas on events that fit the diverse needs of our wider membership. If you are interested in being a part of the chapter's Diversity committee, please reach out to one of us.

Early Career Physicians

Angela Kang, MD and Sarita Soares, MD

Many of you might be getting closer to graduating from residency or are early in your career and are thinking about the logistical set of responsibilities that come with being a licensed physician. For example, licensed internists are expected to keep track of their continuing medical education (or CME) and report to the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) that they have met their requirements. We are expected to earn 50 hours of CME every 2 years, with 1 credit in various subjects during the first renewal and every 6 years after. These various subjects include:

- Cultural Competency
- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Assault
- Behavioral Health
 - o After January 1, 2016, such behavioral health CME may include but not limited to, at least two contact hours of training or education during the first renewal period and not less than once every six years thereafter:
 - mental health conditions common to veterans and family members of veterans, including (i) determining whether a patient is a veteran or family member of a veteran, (ii) screening for conditions such as post-

traumatic stress disorder, risk of suicide, depression, and grief, and (iii) suicide prevention training

- Infectious Disease
 - o Includes, but not limited to, AIDS and HIV
- Risk Management
 - o Includes, but not limited to, prescribing controlled substances and pain management
 - o For registration periods beginning on or after October 1, 2019, risk management CME also includes screening for inflammatory breast cancer and gastrointestinal cancers, including colon, gastric, pancreatic, neuroendocrine cancers, and other rare gastrointestinal cancers

As the Early Career Physicians Committee, we want to put this list on your radar and suggest resources that may help you keep track of the CME you are completing.

1. As a member of ACP, you have access to a CME transcript on your ACP profile online which may be helpful in keeping track of the CME activities you have completed. The profile also provides links to finding CME activities.
2. Another resource is the [AMA Ed Hub](#). The AMA Ed Hub similarly has a transcript that can help you keep track of CME and supports auto-reporting to the ABIM, should you need to do that.
3. Finally, there are some of us that track completed CME via Google Sheets or even an Excel document . This way, if you submit UpToDate or MKSAP questions for CME credit, you can log them yourself in your sheet.

Pro Tip: if you work within a hospital setting, many of the section educational conferences and grand rounds may be eligible for CME credit so make sure to sign-in correctly – you can then request a log of your CME credits from the CME office. Also, most educational and society meetings offer CME (such the ACP meetings, Society of Hospital Medicine, Society of General Internal Medicine, etc.). You usually have to complete the evaluation to receive the CME credits. Make sure you don't leave these on the table! Finally, certain educational resources keep track of your just in time learning and record your CME credits such as UpToDate and MKSAP as long as you are signed in via a personal account.

Let us know if any of you have found additional resources that have been helpful in keeping track of CME.

Be aware that there is a separate requirement for Maintenance of Certification (MOC) credits. This has been somewhat controversial over the years and has led to some changes. In order to remain in good standing in terms of your certification status, physicians are expected to earn points every 2 years (on average 20 points towards a total of 100 points required to be eligible

to recertify). Our annual ACP Connecticut conference in October has opportunities to gain both CME and MOC points through a variety of offerings. Faculty at teaching programs may be eligible for MOC credits for some of their regular teaching activities.

Traditionally, physicians took a 10-year recertification exam. Currently there is also an option to take the MOC Knowledge check-in exam that is shorter and open book every 2 years. This option will be sunset once the ABIM creates the next reiteration of MOC. The cost of both these options are equivalent. The ABIM website (<https://www.abim.org/>) provides good information about the pros and cons of each option.

Happy Holidays from your Early Career Physician Chairs!

Annual Meeting – Program Planning Committee

Diana Sewell, MD and Naseema Merchant, MD (Chairs)

The annual meeting of the Connecticut chapter of the ACP took place virtually on October 16th to 18th, 2020. Although official feedback is not yet available, the informal feedback has been very positive. Attendance, while not as high as the most recent in-person meetings, was great with 209 registered attendees. The virtual platform came with its advantages – we were able to spread out the meeting over the weekend without the usual concerns like travel and accommodations.

The day prior to the actual meeting, we hosted a pre-meeting session, a “diversity story slam” arranged by the chapter’s Diversity Committee. Writers from across the state shared powerful stories of what diversity meant and how it impacted them. The session was incredibly popular and well received. Stories are available on the ACP website for anyone that would like to hear them.

The actual meeting started on Friday the 16th. The day was filled with concurrent didactic sessions – 13 in total. There was an inpatient track addressing HTN in the hospital, peripartum emergencies, preoperative assessments, as well as inpatient addiction medicine. Many outpatient topics were covered with sessions on emerging infectious diseases, COVID-19, Lupus, care of the LGBTQ patient among others. We had lunch together virtually while Nina Pirrotti, an employment attorney, addressed attendees on discrimination and retaliation in the workplace. It was a powerful and informative session enjoyed by all.

Saturday started off with our 6th Annual, and first virtual, Women in Medicine Networking Breakfast. After an address from our guest speaker, Nina Pirrotti, on gender pay inequality,

attendees broke out into small groups and shared thoughts and challenges on this topic. Following the breakfast, the chapter in keeping with its annual tradition, again offered two ABIM SEP modules concurrently– the Internal Medicine SEP module was presented by Dr. Barry Wu from Yale, and Dr. Stephen Atlas also from Yale. Dr. Rob Nardino and Dr. Diana Sewell, both from UConn Health, presented the Hospital Medicine Module.

Sunday morning, we reconvened for a well-attended business meeting run by Dr. Rebecca Andrews, followed by our chapter awards presentation. We would like to offer huge congratulations to all our deserving winners. The meeting concluded with presentations by our resident poster session finalists from both the research/QI and clinical vignette categories. Congratulations to the residents and kudos to all for their excellent participation in the virtual poster event.

Overall, it was a successful, albeit different style, of meeting with many great educational offerings, good attendance, and positive feedback. The planning committee will continue to review feedback and suggestions so that we can better meet the needs of our chapter especially in the near and uncertain future.

We would like to thank our planning committee for their hard work and dedication. Thank you to our speakers, moderators, facilitators, exhibitors, and everyone else who contributed to making this meeting a success.

We would also like to thank our administrative staff – especially Theresa Barrett, Kat Cavallo, and Herb Holland for their hard work planning and executing this live virtual event.

Health and Public Policy

[Anthony Yoder DO, MPH and Benjamin Cherry MD](#)

The Health and Public Policy Committee held a virtual meeting to welcome new members and discuss upcoming legislative advocacy work. We have a diverse group of members including residents, recent graduates, and physicians established in practice and discussed a variety of interests and goals for upcoming work. The HPPC is planning an active agenda for the upcoming year including parity for telehealth services, medication affordability, opiate recovery, scope of practice issues, and EMR interoperability. Preserving and strengthening the key protections in the Affordable Care Act will continue to be a significant topic and HPPC will continue to actively engage on the state and local levels to support patients' access to care. HPPC co-chair Dr. Cherry participated in an event at the Connecticut Supreme Court with state representatives and patient advocacy groups highlighting ongoing risks to coverage -

<https://www.wnpr.org/post/conn-aca-supporters-say-federal-law-risk-ginsburgs-absence>

As the pandemic continues, we are discussing ways to provide opportunities for virtual advocacy during the pandemic and beyond. Stay tuned for more information regarding Leadership Day events in Connecticut and Washington, DC. Members interested in being informed about upcoming events or work with committee activities should contact Anthony Yoder (yodera@chc1.com) or Ben Cherry (benjamin.cherry@yale.edu).

Awards Committee

Eric Mazur, MD and Rosemarie Fisher, MD

Despite the disruption of COVID-19, the CT ACP Awards Committee created two new awards and selected five awardees this past year. Dr. Stephen Atlas of New Haven was named the Henry Gift Distinguished Internist. After 15 years as a primary care community internist, Dr. Atlas joined the teaching faculty of the Hospital of St. Raphael (now part of Yale), ultimately becoming the Medical Director of the Primary Care Center. He has won numerous awards recognizing his teaching and clinical skills. Dr. Jadwiga (Iga) Stepczynski of Yale received the Early Career Physician Teaching Award. Dr. Stepczynski is currently the Medical Director of the Henry S. Chase Outpatient Center of the Alliance Medical Group in Waterbury CT and Ambulatory Firm Chief of the Yale-Waterbury Internal Medicine Residency Program. Dr. Stepczynski's work is distinguished by her exceptional clinical and teaching skills as well as her innovative approach in creating new educational and clinical ambulatory programs. Matt Ritter, representing the 1st Assembly District in Hartford and the CT House Majority Leader was named the CT ACP Legislator of the Year. The award recognizes Ritter's legislative efforts in helping to prevent deaths from opioid overdoses, increasing hospital fee transparency, and enhancing the coverage of mental health services by private insurance.

After much discussion, two new awards were created this year. Dr. Rosemarie L. Fisher, MACP of Yale received the first CT ACP Chapter Female Physician Leadership Award. This award "honors outstanding female physician leaders who have made significant contributions to the science and/or practice of internal medicine, medical education or medical leadership, thus serving as exemplary role models for other female physicians." Dr. Fisher is a longstanding member of the CT ACP Governor's Council and has a distinguished career of leadership at the Yale School of Medicine. Currently, she is a Professor Emeritus of Medicine (Digestive Diseases) and Director of Resident/Fellow Well-being, Office of the Provost at Yale. Dr. Fisher has been essential in more closely aligning Yale leadership with the Connecticut ACP. In recognition of her outstanding and ongoing contributions, this award will hereinafter be named the "Rosemarie L. Fisher Female Leadership Award."

Finally, the CT ACP, reflecting increasing attention at the national level, created the CT ACP Chapter Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Award. This award recognizes individuals who excel in 1) promoting physician diversity and/or 2) develop/lead initiatives and organize local events that promote diversity, inclusion, and involvement throughout the entire CT ACP thus increasing “value of ACP membership for Connecticut’s diverse physician and medical student population.” The inaugural winner of this award in 2020 is Dr. Inginia Genao of Yale where she is Associate Professor, co-chair of the Diversity Committee, GME Director of Diversity, and Director of Primary Care. A native of the Dominican Republic, Dr. Genao has devoted her entire medical career to, and published widely on, fostering cultural sensitivity and competency among medical students and residents.

Each year we recognize the immense physician talent we have in our state. The Awards Committee has compiled the description of our awards as well as a history of past winners. Please read through the great history of medicine in the state of CT and nominate any local stars for next year’s awards.

CONNECTICUT ACP AWARDEES 2020 (Updated 12/13/2020)

LAUREATE AWARD

- 1986 -- Jack Falsone, Ralph Reinfrank, Howard Spiro
- 1987 -- Marvin Garrell, Paul Kunkel, Robert Massey, Fred Nichols
- 1988 -- Orpheus Bizzozero Sr., Vincent DeLuca Jr, Julius Sachs
- 1989 -- Thomas Amatruda Jr, James Kenney, Philip Morgenstern
- 1990 -- Joseph Belsky, Harvey Mandel, Sidney Perlman
- 1991 -- Martin Gorden, Robert Gordon, Morris Seide
- 1992 -- Vincent Andriole, William Eckhardt Jr, Gerald Petegoff
- 1993 -- Bruce Bower, Norman Marieb, John Sacco
- 1994 -- Arnold Koff, George Thornton
- 1995 -- J. David Schnatz, Alvan Feinstein
- 1996 -- Nancy Adams, Noel Robin, Leo Cooney
- 1997 -- Vincent Quagliarello, Arthur Rosenberg, Milton Sands
- 1998 -- Joseph Cleary, Everett Cooper, David Podell
- 1999 -- Paul Dolinsky; Majid Sadigh
- 2000 -- Sherri Clayton; Robert McLean
- 2001 -- James Bernene; Barry Wu
- 2002 -- Ernest Moritz
- 2003 -- Aldo Bellucci; Eric M. Mazur
- 2004 -- O.J. Bizzozero Jr
- 2005 -- Thomas Lane; Robert Nardino
- 2006 -- Henry Schneiderman
- 2007 -- Ira Mickenberg; John D’Avella; Joel Danisi
- 2008 -- Steve Angus

2009 -- David Miner
2010 -- Adam Silverman; Steve Wolfson
2011 -- Nancy Angoff
2012 -- Keith vom Eigen; Stephen O'Mahony
2013 -- Catherine Apaloo; Fitzhugh Pannill III
2014 -- Rebecca Andrews; Jason Ouellette
2015 -- Naseema Merchant
2016 -- Ellen Nestler
2017 -- Ruth Weissberger, Rosemarie Fisher
2018 -- Marilyn A. Katz
2019 -- Daniel G. Tobin
2020 -- None

GEORGE THORNTON AWARD

1996 -- Frederick Haeseler
1997 -- Martin Floch
1998 -- Richard Garibaldi
1999 -- Frank Davidoff
2000 -- Peter Herbert; Henry Schneiderman
2001 -- Lawrence Raisz
2002 -- Thomas Duffy
2003 -- Sharon A. Diamen; Asghar Rastegar
2004 -- Stephen Atlas
2005 -- Margaret Bia; Joseph Cleary
2006 -- David Coleman; Paul Sirop
2007 -- Frank Bia
2008 -- Andre Sofair
2009 -- David Podell; Noel Robin
2010 -- Dan Henry; Yaw Amaoteng-Adjepong; Joseph Belsky
2011 -- Ernest Moritz; Joseph Renda
2012 -- Cyrus Kapadia; August Fortin; Eric Mazur
2013 -- Gregory Buller; Barry Wu
2014 -- Rosemarie Fisher; Lynn Kosowicz
2015 -- Nancy Adams; Chuck Seelig
2016 -- Stephen Huot
2017 -- Aldo Peixoto, Rob Nardino
2018 -- Mark Kulaga, Amenuve (Ambek) Bekui
2019 -- Marjorie Golden
2020 -- None

VOLUNTEERISM AWARD

2001 -- Robert Gifford

2002 -- Bruce Gould
2003 -- Peter Ellis
2004 -- Stephen Huot; Scott Wolf
2005 -- Serle Epstein; Arthur Wolf
2006 -- Donna Criscenzo; Stephen Winter
2007 -- Laurie Bridger
2008 -- Kevin Dieckhaus
2009 -- Fred Finkelstein
2010 -- Suzanne Lagarde
2011 -- Jeanne Breen; Jonathan Fine
2012 -- Richard Kayne
2013 -- No Award
2014 -- M. Saud Anwar
2015 -- Eric Fan
2016 -- Z. Michael Taweh
2017 -- Luiz F. Diez-Morales
2018 -- Atique Aham Mirza
2019 -- Michael Steinberg
2020 -- None

HENRY C. GIFT DISTINGUISHED INTERNIST AWARD

2013 – Henry C. Gift
2014 – Joseph Andrews
2015 – Ernie Moritz
2016 – Joseph Cleary
2017 – James Sarfej
2018 – Daniel Marshall
2019 – Myra Skluth; Paul Sirop
2020 – Dr. Steven Atlas

EARLY CAREER PHYSICIAN TEACHING AWARD

2019 – Stephen Holt
2020 – Jadwiga Stepczynski

ROSEMARIE L. FISHER FEMALE LEADERSHIP AWARD

2021 – Rosemarie L. Fisher

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION (DEI) AWARD

2020 - Inginia Genao

CT LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD (Since 2017)

2017 - None

2018 - None

2019 – CT Representative Sean Scanlon (D, Branford/Guilford)

2020 -- CT Representative Matt Ritter (D, Hartford)

CURRENT MASTERS (18)

- Joseph Belsky (1999)
- Joseph Cleary (2007)
- John Fitzgibbons (2008)
- Norman Marieb (2011)
- David Podell (2011)
- Eric M. Mazur (2012)
- Noel Robin (2012)
- Henry Schneiderman (2016)
- Rosemarie L. Fisher (2016)
- Nancy Adams (2018)
- O. Joseph Bizzozero (2018)
- August H. Fortin VI (2018)
- Robert J. Nardino (2019)
- Ernest Moritz (2019)
- Peter N. Herbert (2020)
- Robert M. McLean (2020)
- Patrick G. O’Conner (2020)
- Gerald I. Shulman (2020)

NATIONAL ACP AWARDS (since 2017)

2017

August H. Fortin VI – Jane F. Desforges Distinguished Teacher Award & Master

Silvio E. Inzucchi – Samuel Eichold II Memorial Award for Contributions in Diabetes

2018

The Connecticut Hospice – Edward R, Loveland Memorial Award for a Distinguished Contribution in the Health Field

2019

Robert J. Nardino – Outstanding Educator of Residents and Fellows

Gerald I. Shulman -- Samuel Eichold II Memorial Award for Contributions in Diabetes

2020

Joseph P. Cleary – Jane F. Desforges Distinguished Teacher Award

Chapter Awards – 2021

The CT ACP Chapter Laureate Award is the most prestigious honor bestowed at the local level and recognizes Fellows and Masters of the College who have demonstrated by their example and conduct an abiding commitment to excellence in medical care, education, or research, and in service to their community, the Chapter, and the American College of Physicians. The awardee must be an active member, Fellow, or Master of the American College of Physicians in Connecticut.

The Henry Gift Distinguished Internist Award honors a Connecticut internist, often in private or non-academic practice, who has distinguished him/herself by continuing medical education, a lifetime of outstanding service to the care of patients, and ongoing, active participation and notable leadership within the local medical community. The awardee must practice or have practiced in Connecticut and may or may not be a member of the American College of Physicians.

The CT ACP Chapter Volunteerism Award recognizes an internal medicine physician whose volunteer efforts have made a substantial and enduring contribution to his/her local community, to the country, or internationally. The volunteer efforts must be entirely separate from his/her paid employment and generally represent years of commitment with demonstrable and positive outcomes. The awardee must be an active member, Fellow, or Master of the American College of Physicians in Connecticut.

The George F. Thornton Teaching Award recognizes a physician with a career distinguished by involvement and excellence in medical education. Typically, this individual is involved with medical students and/or internal medicine residents but a history of peer-teaching with involvement in continuing medical education would be considered. The awardee must be an active member, Fellow, or Master of the American College of Physicians in Connecticut.

The CT ACP Legislator/Public Servant of the Year Award recognizes a Connecticut legislator or other public servant (elected or appointed) who has demonstrated leadership and strong advocacy in areas of legislation or public policy, consistent with ACP policies, to improve healthcare delivery to our patients and to enable our physicians to more effectively perform the work necessary to deliver the care. The Awardee need not be a physician or a member of the American College of Physicians.

The CT ACP Chapter Early Career Physician Teaching Award recognizes an early career physician (within 16 years of medical school graduation) who has distinguished themselves as a notably outstanding educator of medical students and/or internal medicine residents. This individual must be the equivalent of Associate Professor or junior, be a member or fellow of the CT Chapter ACP and exhibit a career to date that is demonstrably focused on medical

education. Support statements for this award from trainees taught by this individual are highly desirable.

The Rosemarie L. Fisher Female Physician Leadership Award honors outstanding female physician leaders who have made significant contributions to the science and/or practice of internal medicine, medical education, or medical leadership, thus serving as exemplary role models for other female physicians. The overall objective of the Award is to highlight the contributions of women in internal medicine and to promote role models who will motivate the next generation of female physician leaders. The awardee must be an active member, Fellow, or Master of the American College of Physicians in Connecticut.

The CT ACP Chapter Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Award recognizes individuals who excel in meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Promote physician diversity* and inclusion with outstanding achievements in mentoring, leadership development, and role modeling for physicians or medical students from diverse and/or under-represented populations.
- Develop and lead effective initiatives to integrate diversity* and inclusion across the CT ACP Chapter's governance and membership AND ensure that those strategies are responsive to the changing environment and demographics.
- Organize events that promote professional development, foster diversity* and involvement in CT ACP Chapter activities, and increase the value of ACP membership for Connecticut's diverse physician and medical student population.
- The awardee must be an active member, Fellow, or Master of the American College of Physicians in Connecticut.

*Diversity is as characterized in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy of the national American College of Physicians dated July 20, 2019.

Advocates for Internal Medicine Network



SUBJ: ACP Action Alert: REMINDER: Tell Congress not to delay CMS's Final 2021 Medicare Payment Increases for Outpatient Visits! Time is of the Essence!

Dec. 8 Update: With this session of Congress winding down in a matter of a few weeks, we are urging members to please reach out to your lawmakers on this important issue, if you

have not already. We have added a call script in addition to a sample letter for your convenience so please act now!

On December 1, 2020, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released the final 2021 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS). ACP is very pleased that it will increase payments for many office visits and related E/M services, create new "G" codes that will allow physicians to get additional payments for complex visits and visits that take more time than usual (prolonged services), and increase payments for care coordination. ACP specifically supports, *and calls on Congress to support*, CMS's decision to implement a new code to better recognize a particularly complex patient visit. Code G2211 will allow physicians to account for services like chronic disease management tracking, reviews of consult or lab reports, medication-related monitoring and safety outside of patient visits, and physician input at assisted living or nursing homes.

These payment increases are essential to primary care physicians, whose practices have been hit especially hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. **We need your continued help to ensure that Congress does not delay, or phase-in these improvements over several years instead of fully implementing them on January 1, as part of legislation to hold other physician services harmless from budget neutrality payment reductions (see background below for details).** In a [letter](#) to congressional leaders, ACP urged Congress to support implementation of these increases as scheduled without delay. ACP also issued a similar [statement](#).

While many physicians and specialties providing undervalued E/M services will see major improvements in overall payments in the final 2021 MPFS, some will see reductions. ACP is supportive of requests to Congress to waive budget neutrality for the 2021 Fee Schedule, provided that this would not result in a delay or in any way undermine CMS's decision to fully implement the E/M increases and other improvements on Jan. 1.

Action Requested: Click on the links below, follow the prompts, and send a letter or call your members of Congress to urge them to support the scheduled Jan. 1 payment increases for primary and comprehensive care in the MPFS. A sample letter and call script have been provided for you that you can personalize. A call is preferable to sending a letter, if at all possible, but both are effective. **Time is of the essence, because Congress will be deciding in the next few days and weeks on a final bill to address the BN cuts and the improvements for outpatient visits.**

TAKE ACTION NOW!

[Call Your Members of Congress Now!](#)

[Send a Letter to Your Members of Congress Now!](#)

Background

Under the Medicare law, improvements in payments for any physician services, must be offset by what's called a budget-neutrality (BN) adjustment, to keep total spending on physician services the same. The application of BN to offset the costs associated with the higher payments for outpatient visits, the complex care add-on, and other physician services scheduled for increases on January 1, will cause payments to go down for many other physician services, and for the specialties that predominantly bill for them but typically do not bill for the outpatient visit codes. The BN adjustment also reduces the gains for the

visit codes compared to what would have been the case without the BN adjustment. The specialties that would experience cuts in payment from BN have been urging Congress to pass a bill that would hold them harmless from any cuts in 2021 and 2022, while allowing it to go into effect for the outpatient visit and G2211 codes.

Currently, Congress is working on legislation to hold physician services harmless from BN cuts in payments. **However, to lower the budget cost of doing this, ACP has learned that Congress may decide to delay or phase-in the increases for outpatient visit codes, as well as the G2211 add-on code for complex visits.** While ACP can support legislation to prevent cuts to physicians during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have told Congress that:

- **Any "hold harmless" legislation must be fair to all physicians and their services.**
- **Any solution to hold physicians harmless from cuts must not include any delay or phase-in of the increases for outpatient visit codes and/or the G2211 complex care visit code.**

Stay tuned for future updates as our advocacy on this issue continues. Follow us on [Twitter](#) @advocatesIM and [Facebook](#)/acpinternists and check our [Legislative Action Center](#) often.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ctacp/>

<https://twitter.com/ConnecticutACP>

"In the face of adversity, we have a choice. We can be bitter, or we can be better. Those words are my North Star."

-Caryn Sullivan

And to all a goodnight,
Rebecca Andrews, MD, FACP - Governor