Greetings to all my friends and colleagues in our Georgia Chapter!

There is never a dull moment in the life of the American College of Physicians and certainly not in the Georgia Chapter. Continuing my theme of the “Triple Aim” of Education, Advocacy and Membership, during my tenure as Governor, our Chapter has indeed accomplished much in the last 5 months. We have been honored with awards from our national organization, along with passage of an important Resolution we brought to the Board of Governors, and we had several members who received national ACP awards along with many members who became new Fellows in the College this year.

The Georgia Chapter was one of only eight Chapters to receive an Evergreen Award, the top award for Chapter accomplishment based on a major project. We received this award for our 2 year project promoting our Council of Young Physicians (CYP), now aka, the Council of Early Career Physicians (CECP). I want to especially thank Danny Newman, FACP & Aysha Khoury, FACP for their leadership as respective Chairmen in the past 2 years, along with our executive director, Mary Daniels, for all their work to lead and complete this project. Not only was the project successful and creative, but it has also provided greater interest, input, and involvement of our early career physicians in our Georgia Chapter. Our Chapter also received the Chapter Excellence Award for our continued work in all areas of education, advocacy and membership. Furthermore at the BOG, a major Resolution brought by the GA Chapter this past year was studied in the Medical Practice and Quality Committee and was recommended for passage. This Resolution requires transparency in medical provider billing particularly in hospital owned practices. The BOG is the major policy making body of the College and is where members can submit Resolutions for debate in the BOG. Please contact me on potential resolutions you may want the BOG to consider. The call for Resolution for the Spring 2014 BOG is already out.

At the Convocation Ceremony at Internal Medicine 2013, I was so pleased to have our Georgia Chapter welcome three new Masters in the College (MACP) and 13 new Fellows (FACP).
“Governor- Elect” Election Around the Corner

It is truly hard to believe, but it is time to elect our next ACP Georgia Chapter Governor!!! The election will be this Fall, then the new Governor-elect will spend a year with me to learn the ropes before he takes our Chapter to new heights. Our nominations committee has selected Henry Patton, MD FACP, general internist from Covington, and Walter Moore, MD, FACP, rheumatologist from Augusta to run in the election. Both Henry and Walt are outstanding physicians, tremendous leaders in our Chapter, and truly special personal friends and colleagues. We will be in excellent hands under their continuing leadership in our Chapter. You will be receiving their personal statements and ballots soon so MAKE SURE TO VOTE!

Education

Our annual Chapter Scientific Meeting is around the corner, Oct 4-6, in lovely Savannah, GA at the Hyatt Regency on River St. Registration is open and we are expecting our biggest meeting ever. Our Chapter meeting has grown substantially every year over the past 3 years because we are offering an outstanding menu of educational course options, practice management help, updates on legislative & regulatory affairs affecting internal medicine, collegial social opportunities, and many other opportunities to help you be the best Internal Medicine physician possible. We have programs for the practicing physician, as well as separate programs for our medical residents and medical students. It will be a blast at a gorgeous time in Savannah, and it just happens to be “Oktoberfest” weekend. So bring your family and enjoy a wonderful weekend. I look forward to seeing you there.

Click here to link to the Meeting Brochure

Click here to link to the Registration

In response to feedback we have received on Maintenance of Certification, we had our first ever independent MOC course with two frequently requested SEP Modules, on Saturday morning, April 20, 2013 at the Mercer University campus led by Edwin Grimsley MD FACP, Maura George MD, Danielle Jones, MD FACP, and Niki Patel, MD. These courses on General Internal Medicine and Hospital Medicine were well attended and obviously filled an educational need for our members. We will plan for another independent MOC meeting in Spring, 2014 in the Atlanta area. At our October Chapter Meeting we will have the 2013 SEP Update Modules for Internal Medicine and Hospital Medicine on Sunday morning, October 6.

Advocacy

STATE GOVERNMENT:

We completed the Georgia Legislative session at the end of March, with some wins and losses for Internal Medicine and the patients we serve. These are detailed in the Health & Public Policy Committee (HPPC) report by our wonderful Chairman, Emmett Doerr, but I would like to highlight a few things.

Click here to link to the 2013 Session Summary
Medicaid is a huge state budget issue that we work on every year, particularly preventing provider cuts and thereby patient access. We work closely with the Medical Association of Georgia along with our Patient Centered Primary Care Coalition (GAFP, GA Chapter AAP, GOBGs, and GOMA) particularly on this issue but other issues as well. We were able to prevent the planned 0.74% Medicaid provider cuts. We also made an initial push for Medicaid Expansion in GA, but alas with a first term Republican Governor, and a super majority Republican legislature, it was clear early on Medicaid Expansion in Georgia was going nowhere any time soon. Georgia’s safety net hospitals and safety net providers as well as those people under the 133% of FPL (~850,000 poor uninsured) will have very few healthcare options for now. Our hope is that Georgia legislators might consider an alternative option much like Arkansas has done that would put a majority of these patients into private insurance through the state health exchange. The only other possibility for Medicaid expansion on the horizon would be after the 2014 election. At that point hopefully the Governor and the legislature will see the billions of dollars that Georgia is giving the Federal government in taxes, and the billions we are NOT getting back in return for the citizens of our state.

On scope of practice issues, always big at the state level, our HPPC vigorously debated two major issues.

-The first scope issue was expanding nurse practitioners ability to order expensive advanced imaging tests without direct physician supervision, which we opposed based on the ACP High Value Cost Conscious Care initiative that shows these advanced imaging tests are frequently overused and inappropriately ordered now. Enabling more of these tests to be ordered with less physician supervision is not in patients’ best interest nor in the best interest of us all being good stewards of limited health care resources. Thankfully this bill was defeated this year, but we expect to see it again.

The second scope issue was expanding nurses and pharmacists ability to provide ALL adult vaccines at pharmacies under a signed protocol with a physician. GA ACP opposed this bill based on concerns about patient safety (particularly with live virus vaccines), patient confidentiality, and the fragmentation of care. The primary motivation by the large chain pharmacies here is getting patients in the store to buy many other items. While our ACP Chapter recognizes the importance in significantly improving vaccination rates in GA, we think it is more appropriately done in the patient centered medical home and/or the local public health department, where the vaccines are registered in the GRITS network and the continuity of the patients’ care is maintained. This bill was also defeated.

The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program and getting it funded will be a high priority in next year’s legislative session. Meanwhile the Medical Association of Georgia Foundation has launched its “Think About It” Campaign on prescription drug abuse. I encourage you to check out the link on how we can all do our part to curb this scourge on our patients and our state. Click here.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

On a national level, we took nine GA ACP members to Washington DC for our national ACP Leadership Day in May where we joined 400+ other ACP members from almost every state. Our team was composed of:

Jacqueline Fincher, MD, MACP
Cody McClatchey, MD
Fred Turton, MD, MACP
Frances Ferguson, MD, FACP
Clyde Watkins, MD, FACP
Anna Lee, Mercer Medical Student
Len Lichtenfeld, MD, MACP
Sandeep Krishman, MD, Emory Resident
Mary Daniels, Executive Director

We had our annual State Legislative Day February 7, 2013 with outstanding attendance and meetings with legislators and state regulators. Our next state legislative day will be February 13, 2014 so mark it on your calendar and plan to join us. 2014 will be an extremely important year in health care for our state.
We had excellent briefings by our outstanding ACP Washington staff on Day 1, followed by excellent one-on-one meetings with our GA members of Congress and their staffs on Day 2. Major time and discussion was focused on a bipartisan bill to get rid of the SGR (Sustainable Growth Rate) formula used to calculate physician payment that threatens to cut Medicare payment by double digits every year. At the time I am writing, there is a bill in the House Energy & Commerce Committee getting marked up for specific legislative language and budgeting. This action is the first real hope of repealing the SGR in a decade. See link to blog post by Bob Doherty, ACP Senior VP of Governmental Affairs that provides a great summary of the bill. Click here.

Our Georgia team advocated diligently for GME funding, a very hot topic with regard to federal budgeting of residency programs and how GME funding will continue with new mandates and pressures on these programs. We requested legislation supporting GME financing reform with more transparency and accountability, and legislation requiring that all payers contribute to GME funding. We also requested legislation to increase the number of GME training positions, especially in primary care specialties.

And finally, our Georgia team advocated for protection and continued funding of important programs including the National Health Service Corps, AHRQ, NIH, CDC, Healthcare Workforce Commission and Section 747, training in Primary Care Medicine, that have all been particularly hit hard by the sequester.

I strongly encourage you to sign up to be a member of the AIM network, the Advocates for Internal Medicine. It is the national ACP advocacy network to connect you with the legislative advocacy center and to keep you abreast of quickly changing legislative and regulatory issues important to internal medicine and our patients. Click here to enroll.

I also want to make you aware of the policy briefs that are always available on the ACP website. There is currently a great 2 page brief called, “A Two Pronged Strategy to Improve American Health Care: Make the Health System More Effective & Remove Barriers to the Physician Patient Relationship.” Click here.

Spotlight on Members Attending Leadership Day

Annual ACP Leadership Day – Witnessing Advocacy in Action
Fred Turton, Jacqueline Fincher, Sandeep Krishnan, Anna Lee, Mary Daniels, Cody McClatchey, Eduard Fatakov, Standing: Frances Ferguson and Clyde Watkins

In April, the ACP Georgia Chapter participated in ACP’s Leadership Day in Washington, D.C. This annual advocacy event provides an opportunity for ACP to increase its presence in Washington and bring focus to key issues affecting physicians and the healthcare industry. This year, the Georgia Chapter was pleased to have both a medical student and a resident accompany our coalition and witness advocacy in action firsthand.

Anna Lee – Fourth-Year Student, Mercer University School of Medicine
Anna Lee’s interest in advocacy was peaked last year when her internal medicine clerkship director returned from 2012 Leadership Day. After hearing about her director’s experience, Anna joined ACP. While she had attended several interest-group meetings previously, this was the first time she became interested in advocacy. During her third year of medical school and her first real clinical exposure, Anna realized how important it is for healthcare professionals to be well versed in current healthcare policy because of the impact it has on everyday clinical decisions. After attending 2013 Leadership Day, Anna gained an understanding about what the major policies meant – something she had struggled with for awhile.

Anna said, “Advocacy is another avenue to provide better treatment to my patients. As a student in the Georgia coalition, I felt valued as a voice for the future of healthcare and believe a stronger showing of students at future advocacy events can shed light on the long-term affects of policymakers’ decisions.”

Sandeep Krishnan – Former Resident, Emory University School of Medicine
While in medical school, Sandeep became involved in advocacy through the medical student section of the AMA. During his residency at Emory, which he completed in June, Sandeep pursued his interest in advocacy by becoming an active member of ACP.

Sandeep received a grant to attend the 2013 Leadership Day, which he said was an invaluable opportunity. The entire experience was eye-opening and he now realizes how difficult – but important – it is for physicians to be actively involved in policymaking. Sandeep was pleased to see that legislators do want to hear from physicians and they will make the time to hear the stories about how policies directly affect patient care.
“I would encourage both medical students and residents to become involved with ACP. While it can be hard to find the time, getting involved and staying involved as one’s medical career progresses is important. Our voices need to be heard,” said Sandeep.

Eddie Fatakhov – Resident, Georgia Regents University, Medical College of Georgia

Eddie Fatakhov also had the opportunity to attend 2013 Leadership Day. For him, participating as a resident was extremely beneficial as this was his first exposure to the advocacy side of healthcare. The experience truly opened his eyes to the importance of advocacy.

After being a part of Leadership Day, Eddie now understands that there is more to providing effective healthcare for his patients than what he does for them at the hospital. In a world where the medical field is continuously advancing, he realizes physicians need to be closely involved in creating new policies and that they cannot sit around and hope for change without action.

Continuing to be involved with advocacy through ACP is important to Eddie and he says, “Providing effective healthcare does not end when a patient is discharged, it also requires me to voice my opinions and implement change. Attending Leadership Day was important to me as it is my duty to advocate on behalf of my patients, colleagues and profession.”

Chapter Membership

Finally, I want to give you an update on our Georgia Chapter membership. Below is a chart of current membership as of July 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia Chapter ACP Membership</th>
<th>July 13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fellows</td>
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We have grown over the past three years, but slowly. There is currently over 6800 internal medicine physicians in Georgia, all of whom should be members of their professional Internal Medicine specialty organization, the American College of Physicians. As a member of ACP, this is where we want your help and input. Our membership, Co-Chairs, are Jim Hotz, MD, MACP, from Albany & Danny Newman, MD, FACP, from Augusta who will be reaching out in new ways this Fall to make all internists in GA - general internists, hospitalists, and subspecialists- aware of the many benefits of membership. I hope you will make a personal appeal to those IM colleagues in your sphere of influence. We know that personal appeal is the primary reason people join groups. Forward them this Governor’s Newsletter and share the digital link above to our Chapter meeting in Savannah and invite them to come. Also please be aware of the “Recruit a Colleague” program that discounts your personal dues for every colleague you bring into membership. [http://www.acponline.org/membership/recruit](http://www.acponline.org/membership/recruit)

Finally, I want to remind many of you that you are eligible to apply for Fellowship in the College. There are 4 major pathways to fellowship, and many of you already qualify. The application process has been greatly streamlined. If you have been an ACP member for at least 2 years and shown some type of leadership in your profession, practice, health care system, or providing medical education or community education, or done extensive additional education yourself, i.e. additional degrees, additional boards, recertified, taken MKSAP for score, etc, you most likely qualify for Fellowship. Please see link to fellowship application. [http://www.acponline.org/membership/fellowship/](http://www.acponline.org/membership/fellowship/)

We will also have special session on Leadership, the ACP’s LEAD program, and pathways to Fellowship at our Chapter meeting on Sunday morning. This special session will be led by two very outstanding leaders in the ACP, Robert Lubitz, MD, FACP and Walden Garrison, MD, FACP.

Opportunities abound in our Chapter for your education, input, involvement, and leadership. Come join us and bring a colleague with you!

See you in Savannah!

Sincerely,

Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, MACP
Governor, Georgia Chapter
American College of Physicians

Email: jwfinchermd@gmail.com
Office: 706-595-1461

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