THE NATIONAL AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS' MEETING

The National American College of Physicians’ Meeting was held April 20-25, 2004 in New Orleans. It was certainly exciting to assume the New Jersey Governorship at this meeting. It was also refreshing to observe the affect the atmosphere of New Orleans had on our colleagues. I actually saw an officer of the college with a pink boa wrapped around his neck.

In spite of being in “The Big Easy,” the college faces several very difficult issues which were discussed at the Board of Governors’ Meeting. The most controversial is internal medicine recertification. Many internists feel that the current process is too burdensome. A resolution was passed which stated the following:

- A recommendation that the Board of Regents set a meaningful deadline for agreement with the American Board of Internal Medicine on establishing multiple pathways to certification.
- That the Board of Regents assert that there is a fundamental difference between initial certification and recertification, thus recognizing that internists achieve professional growth in various practice settings and conditions.
- A recommendation that if the deadline is not met, that the Board of Regents immediately develop an ACP administered maintenance of certification plan.

A liaison committee consisting of both American College of Physicians and American Board of Internal Medicine members will meet in June. Hopefully there will be a satisfactory conclusion for everyone. As soon as I have the results of this meeting, I will post it on the website. New Jersey ACP members who would like to discuss the outcome with me should email me at swallach@SBHCS.com.

NORTHERN REGION ELECTION

The nomination process is currently underway to elect a second governor who will represent the northern region commencing in the spring of 2006. At that time, I will then become the governor of the southern region. There will continue to be one council, one scientific meeting, and one financial budget. New Jersey ACP members whose mailing addresses are in the following counties: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union and Warren should be receiving their ballots in early fall. I look forward to working with the new governor-elect.

SAVE THE DATE!

2005 NJ CHAPTER SCIENTIFIC MEETING
FEBRUARY 4 & 5, 2005
SHERATON AT WOODBRIDGE PLACE
ISELIN, NJ
LEADERSHIP DAY

The ACP’s Leadership Day is our yearly event at which chapter members visit their states congressional and senatorial offices and advocate on behalf of our patients and ACP initiatives. Our thanks to Joseph C. d’Orazio, PhD, MPH, the chapter’s Health Policy Advisor, who arranged our trip and appointments with members of Congress.

As a result of our advocacy efforts, six congressmen signed onto a House of Representative’s letter asking the Center of Medicine and Medicaid - to fix the substantial growth rate formula utilized to calculate medicine reimbursement. (If the rate formula is not revised, medicine reimbursements will drop by as much as 30% over the next twelve years.) Chapter members who are interested in advocacy at the national and state level and attending Leadership Day should contact me at my email address: swallach@sdbhcs.com

The following doctors were in attendance:

- Nadine Cohen, Assoc. ACP member - Bloomfield, NJ
- Frank Griffin, FACP - Plainfield, NJ
- Mark Herald, MACP - Westfield, NJ
- Lavin Kahn, FACP - Princeton, NJ
- Christopher Levin, Student - Piscataway, NJ
- Eileen Moser, FACP - East Orange, NJ
- John Walker, FACP - New Brunswick, NJ
- Sara Wallach, FACP - Long Branch, NJ

This group represented our Chapter and took part in the largest Leadership Day ever - 217 members participated from 41 states, the District of Columbia, and the Air Force. Attendees heard first-hand from members of Congress, legislative staff, and administration officials about how they view the issues of greatest concern to internists. Among the many notable speakers: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator, Mark McClellan, MD, PhD spoke about the future of healthcare in America; Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) discussed the HealthCARE Act and access to care; Rep. Heath Wilson (R-NM) provided an update on Medicaid issues. Attendees were also treated to an awards dinner that honored the College’s most outstanding Key Contacts of the year and featured keynote speaker Charlie Cook, editor of The Cook Report.

Since ACP depends on Leadership Day participants to put a face on the College’s advocacy program, the most important element of Leadership Day is the opportunity for attendees to bring the College’s message directly to their members of Congress on Capitol Hill. Our delegation met with staff members in the offices of Senators Corzine and Lautenberg. The congressional offices offices we visited were: Andrews(D), LoBiondo(R), Saxton(R), Smith(R), Garrett(R), Pallone(D), Ferguson(R), Pascrell(D), Rothman(D), Payne(D), Frelinghuysen(R), Holt(D),and Menendez(D) to discuss physician payment, access to care, liability reform, patient safety, quality improvement, and electronic health records. A highlight of our visit to Capitol Hill was meeting personally with Congressman Rush Holt. He agreed to sign onto the CMS letter and expressed a willingness to explore the college's policies on medical liability and the uninsured.

Leadership Day participants received an overwhelmingly positive response to the College’s request for members of Congress to sign onto House and Senate letters asking CMS to fix the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula. The final SCR letters were sent to CMS days after Leadership Day with the signature of 240 representatives and 73 senators. This is just one example of the positive impact Leadership Day had. We look forward to participating next year and working locally to maintain the momentum of ACP issues.

VISIT OUR CHAPTER WEB SITE

http://www.acponline.org/chapters/nj
REVITALIZATION OF INTERNAL MEDICINE

The American College of Physicians will continue to devote much of its resources to the revitalization of internal medicine. Four top priorities have been identified for the college to work on:

(1) repair a dysfunctional payment system
(2) reduce the hassles and inefficiencies of medical practice
(3) educating the public and purchase about the value of internal medicine, and
(4) revamp training to give students and residents more experience with new modes and systems of care.

The college is currently reaching out to other internal medicine organizations such as the Society of General Internal Medicine, the Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine, the Society and Hospital Medicine, and the American Board of Internal Medicine. New Jersey ACP members and associate members who are interested in working in this endeavor at the state level should contact either myself or Stacey Knowles.

INFORMATION RX: ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PRESCRIPTIONS A PHYSICIAN CAN MAKE

Signing up for the Information Rx Program is both free and easy. Physicians can sign up to receive MedlinePlus prescription pads, office posters and bookmarks that they can give patients at the Foundation’s website, foundation.acponline.org

The ACP Foundation launched its new initiative, the Information Rx Project, at Annual Session 2004. The Information Rx Project is a free member benefit that utilizes several tools to direct patients to a reliable, evidence-based, and commercial-free website, MedlinePlus (www.MedlinePlus.gov). Using Information Rx pads, physicians prescribe information for their patients pertaining to a specific condition or medical concept. Once at MedlinePlus, patients are able to get accurate and evidence-based information that takes into account the lower health literacy levels of many patients.

Most physicians agree on the importance of patients to be more informed and more involved in their healthcare decision making process. At a press conference held at Annual Session, Jacqueline W. Fincher, FACP, a general internist from Thomson, Ga., who coordinated a pilot version of the program among members of the College’s Georgia chapter, applauded the benefits of the program.

“It is so much better for physicians to give patients information,” Dr. Fincher said, “than to have them use sites their friends stumble upon on the Internet.” During the pilot program, she explained, 42% of physicians surveyed who had directed patients to the MedlinePlus site said the information improved their physician-patient relationship.

The Information Rx Project seeks to address these issues by providing physicians with the tools to prescribe accurate, commercial-free, and evidence-based information from the internet. MedlinePlus is a patient oriented website available in English and in Spanish developed by the National Library of Medicine. It contains over 650 topics on health conditions, diseases, and wellness, as well as up to date information on drugs and clinical trials all written at a level that is easy for most patients to understand. The site also contains over 150 interactive tutorials for those patients who may have difficulty with the written material.

To sign up for your free Information Rx materials, please visit the ACP Foundation’s website foundation.acponline.org.
Oral Presentations
First Rajan Merchant, MD Overlook Hospital
Second Sonali Sethi, MD St. Barnabas Medical Center

Poster Presentations
First Samad Jabbar, MD UMDNJ - NJMS, Newark
Second Aney Abraham, MD UMDNJ-RWJMS, Camden
Second Bhavani Suri, MD UMDNJ - NJMS, Newark

2004 ASSOCIATES COMPETITION

Oral Presentation - 1st Place
How patients use information from televised Direct to Consumer Advertising (DTCA)
Rajan K. Merchant MD Lorraine Tosiello MD
Overlook Hospital

OBJECTIVE: To determine if televised DTCA of prescription medications influences patients to discuss new medical conditions with their doctors and to request specific treatments.
BACKGROUND: Drug manufacturers are intensely promoting their products directly to consumers, but how this influences patient preferences for brand medication is not clear. Additionally, how this influences doctors to prescribe advertised drugs is uncertain. SETTING: Five Primary care physician's offices in central New Jersey. DESIGN: All adult literate patients presenting to a primary care physicians office were asked to fill out a short survey during 4 wk interval. METHODS: Outcome measures included awareness of advertisements for 6 most commonly advertised prescription categories, whether patients perceived that advertisements provided information about the drugs or about a medical condition, how likely patients were to ask for a prescription they had seen advertised. The influence of demographic characteristics, and education, were also examined.
RESULTS: 407 surveys were included. Patients were on average 49 yrs + 16yrs; 69% females; 52 % whites, 27% African American, and 13% Hispanic. The average years of education were 14.7+3.5 and average number of hours of TV watched daily was 4.4 + 3.5. Results showed that 98% of respondents had seen a television advertisement for prescription medication. Overall 72% of patients said that the advertisement had provided them with information about the drug and 52% that it helped them identify a medical condition. Almost 35% of patients had asked their doctor about a specific medication advertised on television, and of those 87% had that medication prescribed (p<0.0001). Minorities were more influenced by televised DTCA than whites. Blacks and Hispanics were more likely than whites to say the advertisement gave them information about the drug (80% and 90% vs 62% P=0.003); more likely to identify a medical condition (71% and 69% vs 37% P<0.001); more likely to believe the drugs work better (51% and 55% vs 24% P<0.0001); more likely to use the medication (48% and 49% vs 26% p=0.0003); and more likely to spend money for the medication (21% and 16% vs 9% p=0.0640). CONCLUSIONS: Televised DTCA resulted in 35% of patients asking for advertised drug with 87% of these requests resulting in prescriptions. Minorities were more influenced by televised DTCA. DTCA may influence MD behavior because of questions and discussions generated by the patient.

Poster Presentation - 1st Place
Test Anxiety: Do Examinees Worry More about Standardized Patient Examinations?
Samad Jabbar MD and Jo-Ann Reteguiz MD
UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School, Newark

PURPOSE: Anxiety is thought to affect test performance when the test is perceived by examinees as being critical. Studies have shown that students with low levels of test anxiety during multiple-choice-question (MCQ) examinations achieved better scores than students with high anxiety levels. Standardized patient (SP) examinations are being used in medical schools, residency programs, for international graduate certification, and, in the future, will be used for licensing purposes. Since SP examinations reflect clinical ability, they are perceived by examinees as being critical. There are no studies, however, which measure levels of anxiety during a SP examination. The purpose of this study was to firstly measure and then compare SP test anxiety levels to those of a MCQ examination. METHODS: One hundred forty nine third-year medical students at UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School participated in the prospective study. Test anxiety was measured by the Spielberger State Anxiety Inventory (STAI), a 20-item Likert-type questionnaire, which reliably and independently assesses acute anxiety. Students consented to completing the STAI in a neutral setting at the start of the medicine clerkship and following their mandatory MCQ and SP examinations. Mean STAI scores were calculated and t-tests were used to compare levels of examination anxiety. RESULTS: Both the MCQ and SP examination anxiety scores were higher than baseline anxiety levels (p<.05). Students experienced more anxiety following the SP examination (p<.05). DISCUSSION: It appears that examinees are more anxious during a SP exam than a MCQ exam. Since SP examinations are being used more frequently, we encourage residency programs and medical schools to develop anxiety-reducing resources to help students and residents prepare for this worrisome testing experience.
The New Jersey Chapter is seeking physicians who would like to become more involved. The New Jersey Chapter has many committees that need your help.

Physician Name: 

Office Address: 

Phone: 

Fax: 

E-Mail address: 

Office Contact Person: 

Please indicate the areas you may be interested in:

- Membership
- Nominations
- Scientific Meeting
- Health and Public Policy
- Associates
- Medical Students
- Web Site
- Other ideas:

Mail to:
Stacey Knowles
19 Byrnes Lane West
Sayreville, NJ 08872

or via fax at 732-316-2906
or e-mail your interest to stacey.knowles@cigna.com

Should you have any questions, please contact:
Stacey Knowles at 201-533-4606
SUPPORTING YOUR CHAPTER THROUGH CHAPTER DUES

Chapter dues are the backbone of local activities and vital to the success of our chapter. While we are provided some financial support from the national office, the chapter dues collected provide the majority of financial support for local activities. Educational meetings, mentoring programs for medical students, local Associates' research competitions, advocacy with state legislators, and participation by chapter leaders in Leadership Day on Capitol Hill are just some of the activities supported by your chapter dues. Many of these activities are orchestrated by unpaid volunteer leaders in our chapter. However, the increase in activities at the local level has created the need for additional staff support to help manage the day to day operation of the chapter. Your chapter dues help support the cost of local staff and provide funding for new and existing chapter initiatives. When you receive your dues notice, please remember to include the chapter dues in your payment. You will be contributing to the success of many grassroots activities happening right here at home.