

# Young Physician Practice Management



## SURVIVAL HANDBOOK

Council of Young Physicians • 11<sup>th</sup> Edition

## **COUNCIL OF YOUNG PHYSICIANS MISSION AND GOALS STATEMENT**

### **MISSION:**

To enhance the professional development and quality of life for young physicians, foster their involvement in College activities, and ensure that their needs are being met.

### **GOALS:**

- I. To establish and promote the highest clinical standards and ethical ideals in the work and professional lives of young physicians;
- II. To assist young physicians with their academic and professional needs;
- III. To recognize individual excellence and distinguished contributions of young physicians to internal medicine;
- IV. To develop educational programs and products of interest to young physicians that will increase the likelihood of their remaining in the College;
- V. To promote the development of programs for young physicians at the chapter/state level;
- VI. To encourage productive interactions and dialogues with young physicians in other medical specialty organizations on issues of common interest; and
- VII. To incorporate diversity in the composition of the Council and in its strategic objectives.

The Board of Regents established the Council of Young Physicians (CYP) in June 2005 to enhance the professional development and quality of life for young physicians, foster their involvement in College activities, and ensure their needs are being met. ACP recognizes that early career physicians have several distinct professional issues and wishes to be a source of information and advocacy regarding these issues. The Council will work to ensure that the views of young physicians are reflected in all College deliberations and discussions.

A young physician is defined as a physician member of ACP who is within 16 years of graduating medical school and not a Student member or Associate member of ACP. The intent of this definition is to identify members who are early in their professional development, such as those Members who are younger than 40 years of age, or who have entered the medical profession by a non-traditional professional development pathway.

The first Young Physician Practice Management Survival Handbook was compiled in 1999 by the CYP's predecessor, the Young Physicians Subcommittee. Their goal was to provide young physicians with information about setting up and managing a practice, including resources that the College has to offer. Some of the resources noted in these pages can help you with multiple issues.

There may be additional resources other than those mentioned here. We encourage you to visit the Web sites and contact information we have provided to facilitate your search. Neither the CYP nor the College endorses any service provider or any Internet site. You will need to contact each resource directly and decide for yourself which is the most helpful. To contact the staff liaison for the Council, please call ACP at 800-523-1546, ext. 2692 (M-F, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. ET).

A special thank you to CYP Members: Noel Deep, MD, FACP; Luke Hansen, MD, MHS; and Margo Williams, Senior Associate, Center for Practice Improvement and Innovation, for their editorial review of this edition of the handbook.

For more about the College, we encourage you to visit the ACP Web site at [www.acponline.org](http://www.acponline.org).

*Supported by a grant from*

**MARSH**

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## I. Practice and Career Options

[www.acponline.org/counseling/index.html#topic2](http://www.acponline.org/counseling/index.html#topic2)

Not sure about starting your own practice? Review the information about various practice and career options, such as buying a practice, types of private practices, hospital-sponsored practices, part-time employment, etc.

### 1. What Is ACP and How Can It Help You?

[www.acponline.org/about\\_acp/who\\_we\\_are/](http://www.acponline.org/about_acp/who_we_are/)

ACP is the professional association for both general internists and subspecialists. The College's Web site can provide you with detailed information about ACP membership requirements for Medical Students, Associates (residents and fellowship trainees), Members, and Fellows.

If you would like to receive a complete print package of information and an application for College membership, please visit [www.acponline.org/membership/join/](http://www.acponline.org/membership/join/) or call ACP Customer Service at 800-523-1546, ext. 2600 (M-F, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. ET).

### Career Resource Center

[www.acponline.org/careers/index.html](http://www.acponline.org/careers/index.html)

The Career Resource Center features a comprehensive listing of career opportunities, conferences, and available products and services for physicians. There is an additional section on resident career counseling, which includes a series of articles regarding the following:

- Training, Certification, and Licensing
- Searching for the Right Career Opportunity
- Marketing Yourself
- Personal Finances

### Career Opportunities

[www.acponline.org/jobs/index.html](http://www.acponline.org/jobs/index.html)

This section of ACP Online features a comprehensive listing of career openings for physicians from current issues of [\*Annals of Internal Medicine\*](#), [\*ACP Internist\*](#) (formerly ACP Observer), online direct listings, and [\*ACP Hospitalist\*](#). Listings are updated approximately every 2 weeks. Please note that other medical journals have similar features.

### Center for Practice Improvement and Innovation

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice)

ACP's Center for Practice Improvement and Innovation (CPII) offers answers to such questions as:

- What are the best patient documentation, billing, and coding techniques?
- How do you choose the right electronic health record (EHR) system?
- How should you negotiate a physician employment contract?
- What do you need to know before buying into a medical practice or starting your own?
- How do you navigate all the myriad regulations affecting your practice?

Members can access the Center by visiting [www.acponline.org/running\\_practice](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice).

## II. Starting Your Practice

Please also see the Appendices, which contain checklists, timelines, and other information.

### 2. Required Licenses

#### Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

[www.usdoj.gov/dea](http://www.usdoj.gov/dea)

The Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issues your Federal Narcotics License. Prior to administering, prescribing, or dispensing any drugs under the Controlled Substance Act of 1970, you must be registered with the DEA.

DEA Forms are available [online](#) or by calling 800-882-9539 and must be returned by mail. The initial registration period will not be less than 28 months nor more than 39 months.

Once you are registered with the DEA, a renewal application will be automatically mailed to you 45 days prior to your license's expiration date. Any change of address must be reported to the DEA. Renewal applications are not forwarded.

If you already have a DEA number and plan to relocate or close your practice, you must inform the nearest [DEA Division Office](#).

In addition, you must contact the DEA if:

- You administer and dispense scheduled drugs through more than one office
- You are a DEA-registered physician who has a need for Schedule II controlled drugs for office or medical bag use ([DEA Form 222](#), which can be completed online). Effective January 1, 1981, any prescription for any drug classified in Schedule II requires official triplicate prescription blanks issued by the Department of Justice. Prescription blanks are issued to individual physicians and are not transferable. After obtaining your [Federal Narcotics License](#), you must order triplicate order forms from your state's agency handling narcotic enforcement.

#### State Licenses and CME Requirements for Renewal

[www.acponline.org/education\\_recertification/cme/](http://www.acponline.org/education_recertification/cme/)

States have varying requirements for medical licensure. CME requirements for renewal of licenses vary by state as to content and number of hours required. Contact your [state's medical board](#) for further information.

A number of venues are available for obtaining CME. The ACP is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education to sponsor CME for physicians. The College designates its postgraduate courses as Category 1 of the Physician's Recognition Award of the American Medical Association. One credit hour may be claimed for each hour of participation.

As a benefit of ACP membership, you can view and print a transcript of your participation in CME activities offered by the College at [www.acponline.org/transcript/index.html](http://www.acponline.org/transcript/index.html).

Please note that some practices will reimburse or provide a stipend for licensing, whereas others will not. In some states, you need a separate license for prescribing controlled substances; and in other states, you may need prescription pads that are formally printed with your name, license number and practice information.

#### Local Business Licenses

A city business license is generally required for a physician in private practice. Fees for this license vary according to locality. Information regarding the license can be obtained from your city or local chamber of commerce. If you choose to use a unique business name, you may be required to file this name with the county clerk's office and also may be required to register the name with the state medical board.

### 3. Designing Your Office

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/)

The way you go about setting up your office is critical. Allow room for expansion, yet avoid wasted space. You also will want to create an office design that is efficient for physicians, staff, and patients. Hiring a good architect or designer is important. One useful resource, "Workspace That Works: Designing Productive New Office Space," is available for purchase from [www.hcmarketplace.com/prod-2081](http://www.hcmarketplace.com/prod-2081).

### 4. Insurance

The following are the types of available coverage that a physician should have and some that should be considered.

#### Group Insurance

[www.ACPgroupins.com](http://www.ACPgroupins.com)

888-643-0323

The ACP Group Insurance Program is administered by Marsh Affinity Group. They offer various life and health plans for College Members, including Term Life, Office Overhead Expense, Disability Income, Accidental Death and Dismemberment, and Long-Term Care.

Health insurance may be obtained from a variety of sources. Consult with a local agent or independent broker for assistance; ask your state and local medical societies if they offer health plans; and consider health plans available on the Internet, such as [www.healthinsurance.com](http://www.healthinsurance.com).

#### Medical Professional Liability

[www.thedoctors.com](http://www.thedoctors.com)

800-352-0320

The American College of Physicians, in conjunction with The Doctors Company, has developed a medical professional liability insurance program for internists and subspecialists of internal medicine. The program offers a unique combination of medical, legal, risk management, and claims handling expertise. Some state and county medical societies also offer malpractice insurance. (The Doctors Company program is available in most U.S. states. Chapters in New York and Florida offer their own sponsored professional liability programs.) The Doctors Company Web site, [www.thedoctors.com](http://www.thedoctors.com), has significant information on risk management. The information is free and may be of interest even to physicians not looking for separate insurance.

#### Property and Casualty Insurance

For the following items, you should consult your insurance agent or broker.

- **Package or Commercial Multiperil:** To cover your contents, furniture, fixtures, leased and owned equipment, and premises liability in case of fire, flood, or theft.
- **Auto:** To cover nonowned and hired auto liability.
- **Workers' Compensation:** To cover injuries to you and your employees.
- **Umbrella:** To cover excess over your premises, auto, workers' compensation, and employer liability.
- **Fidelity:** To cover dishonesty by your employees.

The following also should be considered:

- Employment Practices Liability
- Employment Benefit Liability
- Fiduciary Liability

## 5. Office Technology (EHRs/EMRs, Software, E-Prescribing, PDAs, etc.)

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/technology/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/technology/)

[www.americanehr.com/](http://www.americanehr.com/)

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/technology/mobile\\_computing/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/technology/mobile_computing/)

The College's Center for Practice Improvement and Innovation has the following resources to help you make cost-effective choices for the computer systems you will need for your office:

- American EHR Partners Program
- EHR Adoption Road Map and Tools
- Meaningful Use
- Electronic Prescribing
- ICD-10
- Communicating with Patients Electronically

Visit ACP's PDA & Mobile Computing area at [www.acponline.org/pda/](http://www.acponline.org/pda/) and discover the wealth of information and products available to College members on their Smartphones, iPhones, and iPads. Gain free access to:

- Clinical guideline recommendation summaries
- ACP Doctor's Dilemma® quiz game
- E-books
- Additional clinical and practice-related resources.

In addition, you'll learn how to get the latest edition of MKSAP® 15 Digital, which enables you to answer MKSAP® questions right on your iPhone, Blackberry, or other Web-connected device. Information is also provided on how to subscribe to a mobile version of PIER® (ACP's clinical decision-support tool), made available through the Skyscape® platform.

## 6. Hospital Privileges

Once you decide where you will practice, you must decide at which hospitals to get credentialed. Apply to the hospital's medical staff office early, because the process may take up to one year. The applications may be very lengthy and may require recommendations, copies of licenses, board certification, DEA numbers, and verification of professional liability insurance.

The hospital also may require documentation and proof of experience in certain procedures. Several interviews also will be required. Have a list of procedures that you completed during residency and fellowship documented and signed off on by your chair or chairs. Temporary privileges for hospitals may take from one week to one month or longer to obtain.

## 7. Payer Credentialing

### National Provider Identifier (NPI)

<https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/Welcome.do>

In order to be paid by both public and private insurance companies, you must obtain a unique identification number. The National Provider Identifier (NPI) has replaced all other provider identifications, including Medicare's Unique Provider Identification Number (UPIN). Applications can be submitted online or on paper through the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System.

Individuals and groups should apply for an NPI. Groups will use their Employer Identification Number (EIN), whereas individuals will use their Social Security Number (SSN) in the application process. Once you receive your NPI, it will not change based on name, address, ownership, membership in health plans, or other personal or professional changes. It is yours for life.

Physicians may not enroll in the Medicare program until they have received an NPI because the number is required on the application. Once the NPI has been received, physicians may complete the necessary forms (CMS Form 855I) and submit the application to the Medicare Part B carrier for their state. The notice announcing the NPI is required to be attached to the 855I form. This form will be processed and will allow physicians to bill Medicare.



## TRICARE and CHAMPVA

[www.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.tricare.osd.mil)

[www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/champva/champva.asp](http://www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/champva/champva.asp)

TRICARE is a program administered by the Department of Defense for military retirees, as well as families of active duty, retired, and deceased service members.

Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) is a health care benefits program for the following:

- Dependents of veterans who have been rated by the Veterans Association (VA) as having a total and permanent disability;
- Survivors of veterans who died from VA-rated service-connected conditions or who at the time of death were rated permanently and totally disabled from a VA-rated service-connected condition; and
- Survivors of persons who died in the line of duty and not due to misconduct.

Under CHAMPVA, the VA shares the cost of covered health care services and supplies with eligible beneficiaries.

## HMOs and PPOs

[www.caqh.org/ucd.php](http://www.caqh.org/ucd.php)

Developed by the Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH) with the support of ACP, the Universal Credentialing Data Source is a single, national process that eliminates the need for multiple credentialing applications. Through this innovative online service, physicians complete one standardized application to meet the needs of all participating health plans and other health care organizations. Periodic electronic updates raise the bar on quality and timeliness of data. The service is simple, convenient, and secure.

## 8. Fee Schedules

[www.cms.hhs.gov/PhysicianFeeSched/](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PhysicianFeeSched/)

Medicare fees are based on a national fee schedule but are subject to slight variations based on geographic area. Carriers often make their state-specific Medicare fees available on their own Web sites. A directory of carrier contact information is available at [www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNGenInfo/](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNGenInfo/) under the **Downloads** section.

## 9. Coding 101: Understanding the Basics

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/payment\\_coding/coding/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/payment_coding/coding/)

You need to report the services and procedures that you perform. There is a three-tiered procedural coding system:

- Current Procedural Terminology (CPT)
- HCPCS National Codes
- HCPCS Local Codes

You need to report why you did what you did. Resources include the following:

- *International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision (ICD-9)*: The CPIO offers a sheet that lists the most common ICD-9 codes for internists at [www.acponline.org/pmcd/icd9\\_codes.htm](http://www.acponline.org/pmcd/icd9_codes.htm).
- *The Pocket Guide to Selected Preventive Services for Adults* lists key screening services, preventive measures, and immunizations. Members can access the Pocket Guide in PDF format at [www.acponline.org/cyp/benefits.htm](http://www.acponline.org/cyp/benefits.htm).
- *ICD-10*: As the deadline of December 31, 2012, approaches, CPIO will offer more and more resources and training to help members and member practices get ready for ICD10. Watch this page for tools and resources regarding ICD-10 implementation:  
[http://www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/payment\\_coding/coding/getready5010.htm](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/payment_coding/coding/getready5010.htm)

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You need to document what you did and why you did it:

- There is increasing focus on documentation by payers. If you did not document it, you did not do it. Your documentation must support the service billed.
- The CYP and CPII have developed a pocket-sized, laminated card with E/M codes and explanations. It is available at [www.acponline.org/private/pmc/emr.pdf](http://www.acponline.org/private/pmc/emr.pdf) or by calling ACP Customer Service at 800-523-1546, ext. 2600 (M–F, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. ET).

For additional help with coding, documentation, and payment, please visit: [www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/payment\\_coding/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/payment_coding/).

## 10. Billing and Collections

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/financial\\_management/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/financial_management/)

ACP's CPII Billing and Collection Manual explains how to run a small practice billing operation. ACP members can download this manual, which includes a section for each role in the office and sample letters, for free.

ACP *Internist* has featured articles on billing. A useful starting point is "[Tips to Help You Avoid Making Common Billing Mistakes](#)."

The American Medical Association "Claims Management Revenue Cycle" is a detailed resource for practices to use to track claims from preparation through to appeal and payment. Go to: [www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/solutions-managing-your-practice/codingbilling-insurance/claims-management-revenue-cycle.shtml](http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/solutions-managing-your-practice/codingbilling-insurance/claims-management-revenue-cycle.shtml).

The Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) has a library resource center that can provide you with information on billing and collections. They can be reached at 877-ASK-MGMA or on the Web at [www.mgma.com](http://www.mgma.com).

## 11. Staffing (Business ID Numbers, Workers' Compensation, OSHA, CLIA, and Medical Lab Evaluation)

### Federal Employer Numbers and Tax Information

[www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html)

800-829-1040 or 800-829-4933

Information about reporting federal withholding, Social Security, and other federal taxes, as well as forms and other tax information is available from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

### State Employer Numbers

[www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html)

Physicians responsible for employees must obtain a State Employer Identification Number. The Employer's Enrollment Registration Form can be obtained from the District Tax office. Details regarding the registration form and mandatory quarterly payroll reports will be explained to you. Information regarding State Disability Insurance is also available. The IRS has a one-stop resource for small business owners and those who are self-employed.

### Workers' Compensation

[www.workerscompensation.com/](http://www.workerscompensation.com/)

If you have one or more full- or part-time employees, state law requires that you maintain workers' compensation (WC) insurance to cover on-the-job injuries. Although there are federal guidelines, each state has its own workers' compensation laws. You should contact your state's Department of Labor regarding these laws. You may also use your insurance broker to assist you in completing the paperwork for workers' compensation.

### Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Regulations

[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Web site provides information regarding OSHA standards for workplace safety.

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## Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendment (CLIA) Regulations

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/mle/clin\\_lab.htm](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/mle/clin_lab.htm)

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/mle/edu\\_cat.htm](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/mle/edu_cat.htm)

[www.cola.org/](http://www.cola.org/)

COLA, an accreditation body for clinical laboratories, is sponsored by ACP. This organization is designed to provide user-friendly laboratory assistance to physicians. COLA provides a number of education products and online courses. The Laboratory Director Program online course, which qualifies physicians to direct moderately complex laboratories under the CLIA program, is available to ACP members at a discount. Other COLA educational publications on CLIA are available at a discount for members from ACP's Medical Laboratory Evaluation (MLE) program.

The MLE Web site also provides a number of educational articles regarding CLIA compliance at no charge. You can order copies of the Federal Register containing the CLIA standards for laboratories. Send your request to:

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Technology Administration  
National Technical Information Services (NTIS)  
Springfield, VA 22161  
800-553-6847 or 703-605-6000

Ask for publication **PB93154615** or **PB95224606**. These are available at a variety of prices in downloadable, CD, and paper formats. See the [NTIS website](#) for further information.

College members may contact [ACP's MLE department](#) for more information. In addition, there are two ACP publications on CLIA that are available to download for free:

- [CLIA and Your Laboratory](#)
- [Waived Testing: Doing It Right](#)

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration provides a searchable database of laboratory testing methods, kits, and instruments indicating the complexity level of each. This database is accessed at [www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfCLIA/search.cfm](http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfCLIA/search.cfm) and can be searched by manufacturer name or test (analyte) name.

## Medical Laboratory Evaluation

[www.acponline.org/mle/](http://www.acponline.org/mle/)

Physicians who perform any testing procedures in their offices are subject to CLIA regulations. ACP's MLE Proficiency Testing Program helps you assure the quality of test results produced by your laboratory. It is approved by CMS, COLA, JCAHO, and state agencies.

The MLE program offers experienced staff that can provide technical support for both the MLE program and CLIA compliance. The focus is on quality education and service. MLE provides Category 1 CME at no charge to participants in its proficiency testing program. ACP and COLA members may qualify for a discount on MLE services.

## III. Defining Your Practice

### 12. Charting

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/forms/matrix.htm](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/forms/matrix.htm)

Deciding whether you will use paper charts or an EHR is a major decision. Advisement about the requirements of regulatory agencies and third-party payers will be beneficial. You will need to be able to accurately record as well as retrieve data about patients. Using a carefully designed paper chart can be nearly as efficient as a good EHR and better than a poor one. CPIO has a system of charting documents available for free download. This form system was designed utilizing formatted templates to save time, cause less aggravation, and improve documentation.

### 13. Promoting Your Practice

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/tools/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/tools/)

To help build a healthy practice, you will have to promote your business:

- Send announcements to other physicians and health care professionals in your area
- List your practice in both the [yellow pages](#) and [white pages](#)
- Create your own Web site and arrange for links with other sites

The College's CPII is another source of information and personal consultation. A "[Marketing Manual for Internal Medicine Practices](#)" is available free to College members.

### 14. Practice Guidelines

#### ACP Clinical Practice Guidelines

[www.acponline.org/clinical/guidelines](http://www.acponline.org/clinical/guidelines)

The College continues to develop evidence-based clinical practice guidelines that cover many areas of internal medicine, such as screening for cancer or other major diseases, diagnosis, treatment, and medical technology.

#### National Guidelines Clearinghouse (NGC)

[www.guideline.gov/index.aspx](http://www.guideline.gov/index.aspx)

The National Guidelines Clearinghouse (NGC) is a public resource for evidence-based clinical practice guidelines sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The NGC provides an accessible mechanism for obtaining objective, detailed information on clinical practice guidelines and to further their dissemination, implementation, and use.

#### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recognized as the lead federal agency for protecting the health and safety of people at home and abroad, providing credible information to enhance health decisions, and promoting health through strong partnerships. The CDC serves as the national focus for developing and applying disease prevention and control, environmental health, and health promotion and education activities designed to improve the health of the people of the United States.

#### U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)

[www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/](http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/)

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), first convened by the U.S. Public Health Service in 1984 and sponsored by the AHRQ since 1998, is the leading independent panel of private-sector experts in prevention and primary care. The USPSTF conducts rigorous, impartial assessments of the scientific evidence for the effectiveness of a broad range of clinical preventive services, including screening, counseling, and preventive medications. Its recommendations are considered the "gold standard" for clinical preventive services.

The mission of the USPSTF is to evaluate the benefits of individual services based on age, sex, and risk factors for disease; make recommendations about which preventive services should be incorporated routinely into primary medical care and for which populations; and identify a research agenda for clinical preventive care.

### 15. Social Services, Support Groups, and Patient Education

[www.acponline.org/fcgi/pierpi.pl](http://www.acponline.org/fcgi/pierpi.pl)

Information on social services, support groups, and patient education may be found through your county or state medical association. City, county, and state Public Health Boards are also sources of information.

## 16. Interpretation Services

Today's physician has a diverse patient population. It is desirable to have staff members who speak a second language to assist the physician in speaking with the patients, obtaining a history, and prescribing a treatment. Where this is not possible, there are professional services that offer simultaneous translations over the telephone. It is important to be aware that these services all charge time-based fees, often with a required minimum fee. Interpretation fees are not reimbursable by insurance or the patient.

### Language Line Services

Language Line Services provides two separate options:

- 800-752-0093 is the business office. You can set up an account for considerable cost savings.
- 800-528-5888 has a \$2.50 connection fee and then charges \$4.50 per minute for an on-the-spot translation. You can charge this fee to your credit card.

### Online Translations

<http://babelfish.yahoo.com/>

<http://translate.google.com>

You can type in as many as 150 words and then have it translated from English into a number of languages. Caution should be used, as translations done this way can contain grammatical as well as translation errors, especially of medical terminology. Computers do not understand context and subtle differences among various dialects of the same language.

### Written Translations

It is helpful to have pamphlets in a second language for patient education. Some national and state medical organizations may have such materials available for you at a nominal price. For example, ACP members can access publications targeted toward the Hispanic population at [www.acponline.org/patients\\_families/pdfs/health/healthyheart\\_spanish.pdf](http://www.acponline.org/patients_families/pdfs/health/healthyheart_spanish.pdf).

## 17. Volunteerism

### Getting Started in Volunteerism

[www.acponline.org/volunteerism](http://www.acponline.org/volunteerism)

ACP encourages all physicians to get involved in volunteerism and community service. The cumulative effects of physician volunteerism bring access to health care closer to many underserved patients and can make a real difference in the lives of people and communities.

The College has developed a [brochure about getting started in medical volunteering](#). To request multiple copies of item #210100100, call ACP Customer Service at 800-523-1546, ext. 2600.

## IV. Managing Your Practice

### 18. Staff Management

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/human\\_resources/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/human_resources/)

[www.credentialsonline.com](http://www.credentialsonline.com)

[www.mgma.com](http://www.mgma.com)

#### At the beginning:

- Develop standards for your new staff.
  - Registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, medical assistants, medical technicians, medical lab technicians, and x-ray technicians should have the appropriate degree in their specialty and state licenses where required.
  - In some instances, hospital credentials may be required. Check with the hospitals in your area for more details.
- [Credentials Online](#) provides information about verifying credentials for over 20 different provider types.
- Establish clearly defined job descriptions and employee policies, operational policies and procedures, and a means of appraising performance and providing feedback.
  - The MGMA has a library resource center that can provide you with appropriate information.
- Create a system for running your office.
  - You must always be kept in the loop but out of the gossip.
  - Once the system is in place, you must respect the chain of command and trust the staff to do their assignments. Teamwork pays off.
  - Document everything to protect yourself and your employees.

## As your practice grows:

You may wish to consider using part-time physicians or midlevel providers (that is nurse practitioners or physician assistants) to lighten the workload when there is more work than your current providers can accommodate but not enough to justify another full-time provider.

Part-time physicians can be especially beneficial on Mondays, Fridays, holidays, weekends, or other busy times of the year. Part-time employees can also be a temporary solution while you are looking for a full-time provider. A few good sources for part-time workers are:

- Women (22% of all female physicians work part-time)
- Young physicians with young families or those seeking more balance in their lives
- Senior physicians (physicians coming to the end of their careers but not ready to retire completely)

For more information about part-time practice or non-physician practitioners, members can download a copy of [\*Part-Time Employment for Physicians\*](#) or [\*Hiring a Physician Assistant or Nurse Practitioner\*](#).

## 19. Making House Calls

[www.aahcp.org](http://www.aahcp.org)

There is a growing need to improve care for the homebound, particular acutely ill patients who cannot make regular visits to a physician's office. You may wish to make house calls a part of your practice. Although not all insurance plans will pay for house calls, many do. The American Academy of Home Care Physicians has gathered information on home care CPT/HCPCS codes and recommends estimating revenues and expenses prior to beginning any new service and on a periodic basis thereafter.

## 20. Patient Scheduling

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/patient\\_care/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/patient_care/)

It is important to develop a system of patient scheduling that will reduce physician downtime and delays due to unevenness in patient visit lengths. The College's CPIO has written [\*Designing the Patient Schedule\*](#) to provide insights and offer scheduling techniques that you may find useful.

The CPIO also can offer a list of secure messaging services, which practices can use with patients who want to schedule an appointment via e-mail. To contact the CPIO, please call 800-338-2746, option 6.

## 21. Choosing a Business Consultant/Advisor

[www.acponline.org/counseling/consultant.htm](http://www.acponline.org/counseling/consultant.htm)

As you enter into private practice or change your practice to adapt to the changing medical environment, the help of a business advisor can smooth the transition. This article provides a few tips on how to make that selection.

## 22. Regulatory Compliance (HIPAA, Stark, OSHA, etc.)

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/regulatory\\_compliance/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/regulatory_compliance/)

The CPIO's Web site contains information on HIPAA, Stark, as well as ACP's advocacy efforts on Medicare reform, physician payment, coding, and billing.

### HIPAA

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/regulatory\\_compliance/hipaa](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/regulatory_compliance/hipaa)

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) includes regulatory requirements regarding how patient information is communicated, transmitted, and stored in your practice, both electronically and on paper.

The CPIO has manuals to help understand what you need to do to comply and how to implement these regulatory requirements in your practice, including forms and templates that can be tailored to your practice.

## **Medicare Part D—Prescription Drug Coverage**

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/regulatory\\_compliance/partd.htm](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/regulatory_compliance/partd.htm)

## **The Stark Law—Self-Referral Regulations**

[www.acponline.org/private/pmcl/selfref09.pdf](http://www.acponline.org/private/pmcl/selfref09.pdf)

## **Summary of CMS/OIG Final Rules for Donating Health Information Technology**

[www.acponline.org/advocacy/where\\_we\\_stand/health\\_information\\_technology/hit.pdf](http://www.acponline.org/advocacy/where_we_stand/health_information_technology/hit.pdf)

### **23. Keeping a Watchful Eye Open: Practice Ownership and Operations**

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/)

Now that your practice is up and running, it is time to look at its financial picture, operations, human resources, and patient care. This will provide you with an overall story, provide an early warning, and allow you to monitor performance and progress. The CPII offers a Financial Management Tool to help with monitoring key financial indicators in your practice. You may wish to employ a practice management consultant to assist you in this area. The College's CPII can help you identify competent consultants. To contact the CPII, please call 800-338-2746, option 6.

### **24. Relocating**

Under present law, you must notify the Director of the IRS of any change of address. Failure to do so renders you liable to additional taxes and penalties. You can download Form 8822 at [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8822.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8822.pdf) and mail it to the appropriate address found in the form's instructions.

You also will need to notify the DEA at 800-882-9539 or at [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/webforms/jsp/regapps/common/updateLogin.jsp](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/webforms/jsp/regapps/common/updateLogin.jsp) to transfer your license to a new state. A number of forms are available on this site, including relocation forms. (See DEA section under Required Licenses.) Before relocating, you also should obtain insurance plans for your new location. Contact the county medical society to join their roster of local physicians.

In addition, please notify the College and any other medical organizations to which you belong. Notification of change of address for the College can be done at [www.acponline.org/address/](http://www.acponline.org/address/).

### **25. Looking to the Future: Assessing Your Practice**

Rely on evidence, not instinct. The Practice Management Center offers three check-up programs to help you get the data you need to make sound business decisions. Members may download all three of these products for free.

#### **Practice Management Check Up: Examining the Business Health of Your Practice**

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/financial\\_management/new\\_checkup.htm](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/financial_management/new_checkup.htm)

Practice Management Check Up compares your practice to key general internal medicine benchmarks. This simple but powerful self-assessment tool quickly checks the vital signs of your practice's overall business performance. Results show your practice's relative strengths and weaknesses and can help you diagnose practice problems, re-engineer operations, optimize income, and set realistic productivity targets for incentive compensation.

#### **Office Laboratory Check Up: Is Your Lab Financially Fit?**

[www.acponline.org/running\\_practice/practice\\_management/financial\\_management/new\\_labcheck.htm](http://www.acponline.org/running_practice/practice_management/financial_management/new_labcheck.htm)

All too often, the perception that operating an office lab is not worth the hassle is not based on sound financial analysis. That's why the CPII developed Office Laboratory Check Up. This user-friendly software can be used to determine the lab's profitability, optimize test mix, and evaluate managed-care contract pricing by performing "what-if" scenarios.

This program comes with a manual on laboratory economics.

# Appendix 1

## New Practice Checklist

The following is a list of items you should have in hand when you take steps to start your practice. You should be aware that some processes are lengthy and should be started during your last year of residency if possible.

### Diplomas, Certificates, and Licenses

- Photocopy all diplomas, certificates, licenses, etc. before they are framed.
- Keep master copies in a separate file. You often will be asked to provide these documents.

### Required Licenses

- DEA
- State licenses
- Local business

### Employee Management Requirements

- Federal employer numbers
- State employer numbers
- Workers' compensation

### Insurance

- Personal (life, health, disability, and office overhead)
- Professional liability
- Property and casualty

### Payer Credentialing

- National Provider Identifier (NPI)
- CHAMPVA and TRICARE
- HMOs and PPOs

### Hospital Credentialing

- Decide on the hospitals where you want to be credentialed.
- Have recommendations, copies of licenses, board certification, DEA numbers, documentation of experience in certain procedures, and proof of such experience in hand.
- Apply early.

# Appendix 2

## Checklist and Timeline for Starting a New Practice

### Twelve Months

- Choose a community in which to practice.
- Obtain demographic data about the need for physicians and population data.
- Contact chambers of commerce and economic development offices for community development information, trends, and data.
- Review community amenities and schools.
- Visit members of the medical community to survey the medical environment.
  - Hospital Chiefs of Staff
  - Physicians (solo and group practices)
- Apply for DEA license.
- Contact state licensing boards.
  - Research professional advisors for services you will need.
    - Management consultant
    - Accountant certified public accountant [CPA]
    - Attorney
    - Banker
    - Insurance agent/broker
    - Architect for space planning
- Estimate required start-up capital and determine potential sources of financing.

### Nine Months

- Review procedures for obtaining hospital privileges.
- Decide on a specific practice location.
- Decide on layout and design of office space.
- Hire professional advisors.
- Join medical societies in your new locale.
- Contact telephone company for directory listing deadlines.
- Reserve telephone number.
- Call a Yellow Pages representative about your listing.
- Research telephone equipment systems.
- Research intercom (if separate from phone system) and room status systems.
- Research zoning ordinances regarding business and sign restrictions.



- Prepare business and expense projections for your first year of practice operations.
  - Meet with bankers to obtain a line of credit and other financing.
  - Determine office layout and design.
  - Prepare leasehold improvement plan.
  - Review leases and contracts with your attorney and CPA.
  - Apply to the medical licensing board for license.
  - Determine professional liability carrier.
  - Obtain bids on major equipment.
  - Research practice management and EHR systems.

### Six Months

- Apply for National Provider Identifier (NPI).
- Order computer and business systems (or decide to outsource).
  - Scheduling
  - Accounts receivable
  - Payroll
  - Accounting
- Apply for insurance (including HMOs and PPOs) contracts.
- Apply for State Employer Identification Numbers.
- Contact the IRS and obtain a Federal Employer ID Number (FEIN).
- Order a medical records system (if using paper).
- Order major equipment, including a telephone system.
- Order furniture (waiting room, office, consult rooms, and exam tables and chairs).

### Three Months

- Prepare or acquire CLIA and OSHA compliance plans.
- Determine practice hours.
- Prepare a marketing plan.
- Order office signs.
- Place opening announcements in local publications.
- Design and order stationery, announcement cards, business cards, and Rolodex cards (or create these items using your office software).
- Arrange to give talks to community groups.
- Submit a press release and place advertisements.
- Prepare the patient brochure (include this on your Web site, if applicable).
- Review the final budget with accountant.

- Contract with business partners for any planned outsourcing.
  - Billing services
  - Payroll
  - Transcription service
  - Answering service (or voice mail paging system)
  - Information technology support
  - Cell phones
- Contact medical equipment, pharmaceutical, and office suppliers.
- Arrange for insurance.
  - Malpractice
  - Business
  - Health
  - Personal (life and disability)
  - Workers' compensation
- Schedule installation of telephone and Internet service and equipment.
- Notify pharmaceutical representatives and other salespeople that you are setting up practice.
- Select a pension plan or retirement account.

### Two Months

- Contact the state department of labor for tax forms and employers' requirements.
- Obtain payroll withhold books.
- Prepare job descriptions and an employee handbook.
- Interview and hire an office manager.
- Place employment ads for staff positions.
- Obtain a Medicare fee schedule.
- Determine the practice's fee schedule.
- Order magazines.
- Design and order forms and policies.
  - Registration forms
  - Assignment of benefits
  - Billing policy and collection protocols
  - Privacy policies
  - Consent forms
  - Authorization forms
- Contract with a medical waste disposal company.
- Contract for lab proficiency testing, if appropriate.

## One Month

- Order billing supplies.
  - ICD-9, CPT4, and HCPCS coding manuals
  - CMS 1500 forms, statements, and envelopes (including return envelopes)
- Cash vouchers, deposit stamps, credit card equipment
- Arrange for major equipment delivery.
- Open checking accounts.
- Obtain a business credit card.
- Meet with referring physicians.
- Sign up with patient referral services.
- Make offers to potential staff members.
- Arrange for necessary maintenance services.
  - Laundry
  - Janitorial
  - Groundskeeper
- Order clinical supplies.
- Order office supplies.
- Determine office hours.
- Arrange for laboratory services.
- Notify area pharmacies of your presence.

## One Week

- Set up office.
- Establish petty cash fund.
- Hire and train staff.
  - Telephone techniques
  - Office policies
  - Billing and collections
  - Appointments
  - Nursing procedures
  - OSHA training

# Appendix 3

## Basic Shopping List for Opening a Medical Practice

### Business Office

- Desks/workstations and ergonomic chairs for support staff
- Side chairs
- Wastebaskets
- Horizontal filing–shelves/cabinets
- Computer(s) and software
- Secure and confidential e-mail to patients (HIPAA compliant)
- Physician Web site
- Printer(s)
- Scanner(s)
- Photocopier(s)
- Fax machine(s)
- Dictaphone with offloading feature or online transcription service (or voice recognition software)
- Voice mail
- Bookkeeping equipment, such as adding machine with tape
- Fireproof safe for cash and check payments
- Secretarial organizers and trays

### Stationary

- Letterhead and envelopes
- Notepads
- Prescription pads
- Business cards
- Claim forms
- Registration forms
- Consent forms
- Back-to-school/work slips
- Laboratory slips
- Appointment calendar

## Reception Room

- Upholstered armchairs
- Side tables and lamps
- Magazine covers and wall rack
- Plants, mirror, and artwork
- Children's area
- Television and VCR
- Medical literature (pamphlets in various languages specific to your area and practice)
- Water cooler
- Magazines and books (nonmedical)

## Instruments

- Sphygmomanometers with regular, large, and extra-large blood pressure cuffs
- Stethoscopes
- Wall-mounted otoscope or ophthalmoscope
- Flashlight or wall-mounted unit
- Tongue blades and jar
- Reflex hammer
- Tuning forks
- Cerumen remover
- Syringe and plastic bib
- Disposable vaginal specula and light source
- Anoscopes
- Suction set
- Surgical instruments: scalpels, suture removal kits, and forceps
- Electrocardiogram, leads, and stickers
- Thermometers and sterilizer
- Cotton-tipped applicators and jar
- Emesis basin
- Glucometer and a supply of glucose strips

## Laboratory Equipment

- Microscope
- Centrifuge (hematocrit and urine)
- Hematocrit capillary tubes, sealer
- White blood cell chambers and pipettes
- Sedimentation set
- Incubator
- Urinometer and dipsticks
- Test tubes and racks
- Microscope slides and cover slips
- Bunsen burner and alcohol lamp
- Gram-stain reagents
- 10% KOH or glucagon

- Saline
- Refrigerator
- Wax pencils
- Urine culture sets
- Laboratory timer
- Blood-drawing equipment
- Strep screen kit
- Allergy kit or EpiPen

**Please note:** If you plan to vaccinate in your office or clinic, you will need vaccine information statements, a dedicated storage refrigerator, and a min-max thermometer.

## Examination Room

- Defibrillator
- Examination table and stool
- Waiting chairs or sofa
- Eye chart
- Wall cabinet
- Physician's lamp
- Clothes rack or hangers
- Mirror
- Screen or curtains
- Scale
- Artwork

## Consultation Room

- Executive desk and chair
- Side chairs (3)
- Bookcase
- Credenza
- Lamps
- Wastebasket
- Dictation machine

## Supplies

- Cloth gowns
- Sheets (paper and fabric)
- Assorted syringes and needles
- Assorted tapes
- Assorted gauze pads
- Alcohol pads
- Alcohol hand foam
- Iodine pads
- Lubricating jelly
- Examination gloves
- Sterile gloves

- Topical skin freeze
- Hemostats
- Soap dispenser
- Band-Aids

#### Patient Comfort Items

- Facial tissues
- Sanitary napkins
- Aspirin/acetaminophen
- Paper cups

#### Medication

- Xylocaine
- Oxygen tank
- Morphine
- Diphenhydramine
- Dextrose 50%
- Intravenous set-up
- Resuscitation kit

## Appendix 4

#### Additional Resources

The following is an abbreviated list of resources you may wish to consult. You may find additional resources of your own.

#### American College of Physicians

[www.acponline.org](http://www.acponline.org)  
800-523-1546

#### American Academy of Family Physicians

[www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org)  
800-274-2237

#### American Medical Association

[www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org)  
800-621-8335

#### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
800-311-3435

#### CHAMPVA

[www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/champva/champva.asp](http://www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/champva/champva.asp)  
800-733-8387

#### Conomikes Associates, Inc.

[www.conomikes.com](http://www.conomikes.com)  
800-421-6512

#### The Doctors Company

[www.thedoctors.com](http://www.thedoctors.com)  
800-421-2368

#### Drug Enforcement Administration

[www.usdoj.gov/dea](http://www.usdoj.gov/dea)  
800-882-9539

#### The Health Group, Inc.

[www.healthcaregroup.com](http://www.healthcaregroup.com)  
800-473-0032

#### Health Volunteers Overseas

[www.hvousa.org](http://www.hvousa.org)  
202-296-0928

#### Coding

[www.aapc.com](http://www.aapc.com)  
[www.medical-coding.net](http://www.medical-coding.net)

#### Indian Health Service

[www.ihs.gov](http://www.ihs.gov)  
See [www.ihs.gov/PublicInfo/PublicAffairs/BluePages/index.asp](http://www.ihs.gov/PublicInfo/PublicAffairs/BluePages/index.asp) for a complete phone directory.

#### Internal Revenue Service

[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)  
800-829-1040 (for individual tax questions)  
800-829-4933 (for business tax questions)

#### Medicaid

[www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicaid.asp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicaid.asp)  
877-267-2323

#### Medicare

[www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicare.asp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicare.asp)  
877-267-2323

#### Medical Group Management Association

[www.mgma.com](http://www.mgma.com)  
877-ASK-MGMA

#### National Guidelines Clearinghouse

[www.guideline.gov](http://www.guideline.gov)  
info@guideline.gov

#### Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

[www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)  
800-321-6742

#### TRICARE

[www.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.tricare.osd.mil)

Additional information and resources for ACP Young Physician Members can be located at [www.acponline.org/cyp/benefits.htm](http://www.acponline.org/cyp/benefits.htm).

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# Appendix 5

## ACP Residency-to-Practice Timeline

### 12–16 Months Prior to Practice/Fellowship

#### Plan a Career Strategy

[Planning a Career Strategy](#)  
[Types of Private Practices](#)  
[Hospital-Sponsored Practices](#)  
[Managed Care Practice and Its Variations](#)  
[Locum Tenens](#)  
[Government Employment Opportunities](#)  
[Clinician-Teacher Careers](#)  
[A Look at Five Career Options in Internal Medicine](#)

#### Collect Workforce Stats

[Workforce Issues: Where the Jobs Are](#)  
[Practice Data on Working Hours, Patient Visits, and Income](#)

#### Gather Community Demographics

[Community Demographic Analysis](#)

#### Research Opportunities/Training Requirements

[Information about Subspecialty Careers and Certificates of Added Qualifications](#)  
[Fellowship Training Requirements](#)

#### Begin Applications

#### Gather Opportunities Information

[Resources to Find the Right Job Opportunity](#)

#### Begin to “Market Yourself”

[Make Yourself More Marketable](#)

#### Begin Studying for Certification

[Board Review Strategies](#)  
[Annotated Board Review Guide](#)  
[Determining the Pass-Fail Standards for the Boards and Disclosing Examination Results](#)

### 9–12 Months Prior to Practice/Fellowship

#### Identify Specific Practice Opportunities

[Physician Search Firms](#)

#### Prepare CV and Resumé

[How to Write a Resumé, Curriculum Vitae, and Cover Letter](#)  
[Sample Resumé](#)  
[Sample Curriculum Vitae](#)

#### Request Letters of Recommendation

[Soliciting Letters of Recommendation](#)

#### Interview

[Interview Tips](#)

#### Understand Physician Compensation Methods

[Physician Compensation Methods](#)  
[Understanding Capitation](#)  
[Assessing Managed Care Reimbursement Adequacy](#)  
[Medicare Financing and Payments](#)  
[Medicare Claims Processing](#)  
[Assessing the Financial Solvency of a Managed Care Organization](#)

### 6–9 Months Prior to Practice/Fellowship

#### Assess Your Compensation and Benefit Needs

[Worksheet to Help You Assess Your Compensation and Benefits](#)

#### Negotiate Your Contract

[Assessing the Contract](#)  
[Restrictive Covenants](#)

#### Begin Work on “Practice Paperwork”

[Practice Paperwork](#)  
[State Educational Requirements for Medical Licensing](#)

#### Select Office Equipment

[Basic Shopping List for Opening Up a Medical Practice](#)  
[Medical Informatics](#)

#### Decide on Office Size and Staff

[Deciding on Office Staff Size](#)

#### Begin Looking for a New Home

[Buying a Home](#)  
[Debt Management](#)

### ≤ 3 Months Prior to Practice/Fellowship

#### Finalize Your Contract

[A Last Look at the Contract](#)

#### Arrange for Malpractice Coverage

[Malpractice Insurance](#)

#### Arrange for Other Insurance Needs

[Life Insurance](#)

#### Arrange for Retirement Planning

[Retirement Planning](#)

#### Begin Advertising • Arrange for Movers

[Moving](#)

#### Complete “Practice Paperwork”

## **Tell us what you think!**

We would like your comments about this handbook. Is it helpful to you? Is there something you need that was not included? Please call ACP Membership Development at 800-523-1546, extension 2611 (M–F, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. ET), and let us know how we can improve the next edition. You can also e-mail your suggestions to [mubrdev@acponline.org](mailto:mubrdev@acponline.org).

For more information about the College, we encourage you to visit the College's Web site, [www.acponline.org](http://www.acponline.org).

American College of Physicians  
190 N. Independence Mall West  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1572  
800-523-1546 • 215-351-2400