

In this issue:

- MAFP PRESIDENT ADDRESSES MALPRACTICE AND PHYSICIAN WORKFORCE
- PHYSICIAN SERVICES - TELEMEDICINE
- QUALITY HEALTH FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES CALL FOR PROPOSALS
- BE A PREVENTION PARTNER
- FREE CME: AAFP ACF CD AVAILABLE
- HAPPY HOLIDAYS

MAFP PRESIDENT ADDRESSES MALPRACTICE AND PHYSICIAN WORKFORCE

As most of you know, there was a potential crisis with regard to malpractice insurance premiums facing physicians this January 1st. Med Mutual, which insures most of us in Maryland, was ordered by Insurance Commissioner Ralph Tyler to return all of its declared dividend to the State, a portion of which had been set aside to be used to reduce premiums for current policyholders. This would have resulted in at least a 7% to possibly as much as 22% increase in our premiums next month.

I attended a meeting at Med Mutual in November along with other medical society leaders to acquaint us with their view of the situation. Med Chi, the State Medical Society then invited Commissioner Tyler to present his views at their Board of Trustees meeting a week ago. I am happy to report that through the good offices of both Med Mutual and Commissioner Tyler, a settlement has been reached which will keep the 2008 premium for renewing members at the same level as last year. We are pleased that both sides took the opportunity to meet and negotiate, and we wish to extend our thanks to the executives and board chair of Med Mutual, their legal counsel, and to Commissioner Tyler for all of their efforts on behalf of the physicians of Maryland. You can be proud of the role your specialty societies and MedChi played during this arduous process.

I have also been serving on the Maryland Physician Workforce Study Steering Committee. Dr. Robert Barish MD, Vice President of Medical Affairs University of Maryland, did an excellent job presenting our findings and recommendations to the Governor's Health Access and Physician Reimbursement Taskforce on December 14th 2007. He clearly demonstrated the significant workforce shortages in not only Primary Care but also numerous specialties. Shortages exist not only in the Western counties, Southern Maryland, and the Eastern Shore but also in the Capital and Central areas of the State. I attended, as did Dr. Mary Newman MD another of our Maryland Primary Care Coalition members, and I testified before the Taskforce on the dire economic situation in which many of our colleagues find themselves. Specifically I explained the high cost of hiring new Family Physicians and the inability of family docs here in Maryland to form large groups as they do in Minnesota or Wisconsin where payments are higher, overhead less, and doctor's cash flow situation much stronger. We have made a number of

recommendations to improve physician retention including Tort reform, physician reimbursement, financial aid to the formation of groups, resident retention, loan repayment and others. Med Chi and MHA will conduct a "major press conference" on this subject on January 7. We will keep members informed through this E-Bulletin and through MAFP's website (www.mdafp.org).

PHYSICIAN SERVICES - TELEMEDICINE

From the Maryland Register (11/26/07):

Proposed rule of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene would adopt regulations under a new Chapter COMAR 10.32.05 to set forth requirements for physicians who use telecommunications in their practice, including requirements for licensure, standards for practice, and discipline. The proposal also would clarify the difference between consultative and interpretive services. In addition, the proposal would specify the standards that apply to the practice of telemedicine using a website to communicate with patients and clarify both visual and auditory communications between patient and physician in certain situations. Comments are due Dec. 26, 2007. Contact: Michele Phinney; DHMH; (410-767-6499) http://hcregs.bna.com/cgi-bin/hcstate?md_p012aft330

MAFP President Zebley Comments: This follows the AMA guidelines and the practices of such sites as Medem and POL. Patient's must electronically "ACCEPT" the policies and understand that e-mails are not real time and cannot be used for emergency matters. This is to protect the Doc as much as anything else.

QUALITY HEALTH FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Deadline: January 15, 2008

The Quality Health Foundation (<http://www.qualityhealthfoundation.org/>), the mission arm of the Delmarva Foundation (<http://www.delmarvafoundation.org/>), a national not-for-profit organization committed to improving the quality of health care, has announced a call for proposals for its 2008 grant cycle. Applicants must be from Maryland or the District of Columbia, where Delmarva is the Quality Improvement Organization for the area.

The foundation will award grants to eligible organizations that work to improve health care for individuals and communities through measurable outcome improvement projects. Projects of many types will be funded, including service demonstration programs that focus on producing high impact on health outcomes. Funding priorities for the 2008 grant cycle include improved treatment through the use of "best practices;" improved access to healthcare services; and improved communication of health knowledge.

The program will provide grants of up to \$50,000 each to faith-based groups, healthcare providers, educational institutions, local government agencies, community based non-government organizations, and other organizations and individuals committed to improving access to quality health care.

Program information and applications are available at the Quality Health Foundation Web site. RFP Link: <http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/pnd/10009740/qualityhealthfd>
For additional RFPs in Health, visit: http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/rfp/cat_health.jhtml

Commonwealth Fund Commission Recommends Changes to National Health System (11/24/07)

Ensuring that everyone in the United States has health insurance is essential, but it is not enough to drive the kind of reform the health system needs, a new report from the Commonwealth Fund's Commission on a High Performance Health System finds.

The report, *A High Performance Health System for the United States: An Ambitious Agenda for the Next President*, commends several healthcare agenda items for the next president to consider, including investing in the implementation of an electronic information system within five years, changing the way doctors and other healthcare providers are paid, and better organizing and coordinating care delivery. The report also outlines a five-year plan for containing costs and better organizing the healthcare delivery system. Specifically, the commissioners call for affordable coverage for all, better alignment of incentives and cost controls, higher quality and efficiency, and accountable leadership.

"This report outlines how essential it is that we pursue improvements in healthcare quality and efficiency at the same time as we pursue universal coverage," said Dr. James Mongan, commission chair and CEO of Partners Healthcare System in Boston. "We can not and should not hold either of these facets of reform hostage while we wait for the other to happen."

"Commission of Nation's Leading Healthcare Experts Issues Reform Recommendations for Next President." Commonwealth Fund Press Release 11/15/07.
<http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/pnd/10009926/story>

BE A PREVENTION PARTNER

For Baltimore City and Baltimore County Members - The Baltimore City Health Department has a program called "Prevention Wednesday." It is intended to highlight a particular activity where action today can prevent illness tomorrow. We are hoping that you will help us increase awareness about prevention by being a Prevention Partner.

We all know it is important to focus on prevention. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. In Baltimore City, African Americans are 15% more likely to die from heart disease than Caucasians. In Baltimore County, African-Americans are twice as likely to die from a diabetes-related illness than Caucasians. Baltimore City and Baltimore County are partnering in an important public health initiative to reduce cardiovascular disease and diabetes for all residents and to

reduce unacceptable health disparities (for more information on health disparities go to www.baltimorehealth.org/disparities).

To be a Prevention Partner, you would agree to be on our email listserve. On many Wednesdays throughout the year, you will receive an email with a Prevention Wednesday message attached. As our partner, we ask that you print out this message and either display it or provide individual copies to your patients. To see an example of a Prevention Wednesday message, please see our webpage: www.preventionwednesday.org. Please email Megan.Coylewright@baltimorecity.gov or call her at 410-545-0823 if you have questions and/or are interested in being a Prevention Partner

FREE CME: AAFP ACF CD AVAILABLE

The CME department at the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) has created a valuable new Annual Clinical Focus (ACF) 2006 Caring for Children and Adolescents CD-ROM that is free to members. We'd encourage you to promote this resource within your communications with members and/or at upcoming meetings.

Members can use this comprehensive resource to improve care of younger patients. This CD-ROM contains popular resources from ACF 2006, including:

- 10 video CME online programs (Anxiety Disorders, Children and Disabilities, Violence in Youth, Eating Disorders, Newborn Screening, Asthma Update, Recognition and Treatment of Drug Abuse, Developmental Assessment, Update on Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, and Prevention and Treatment of Overweight in Childhood)
- 10 printable handouts for the online programs
- 3 lectures from the 2005 Scientific Assembly (10 New Things About Care in the Early Years, The Highly Healthy Teen, and Performance-enhancing Drugs: The Taylor Hooton Story)
- More than 60 AAFP journal articles

The CD-ROM is available free to members (\$25 for Non-members). Call (800) 944-0000 and request Item No. 2585.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

The Maryland Academy of Family Physicians wishes its members the Best of the Holiday Season and Good Wishes for the New Year