Dear all:

Please allow this to be an update of MAG’s activities over the last few weeks. My previous updates can be found at [http://www.mag.org/resources/executive-directors-message](http://www.mag.org/resources/executive-directors-message). As always, please feel free to pass along this update to others.

**Blue Cross Blue Shield**
Just in case you missed it – Commissioner Ralph Hudgens forced Blue Cross Blue Shield to rescind the “amendment” that was sent to 6,000 physicians. The “amendment” must now be submitted to the Commissioner for review. Special thanks to all of you for your assistance in giving us the information to make this happen. We need to continue to be vigilant going forward to ensure the onerous provisions are addressed. This is a big win for physicians and Commissioner Ralph Hudgens deserves a big thanks for his attention to the physicians and patients in Georgia. More information can be found at [http://www.mag.org/news/articles/doi-scraps-bcbsga-amendments](http://www.mag.org/news/articles/doi-scraps-bcbsga-amendments).

**American Medical Association Interim Meeting**
The AMA held its interim meeting in Dallas, Texas from November 7-11. Georgia was well represented with its delegation led by Drs. Bill Clark and Sandra Reed. Here are a few highlights from the meeting:

- **Sustainable Growth Rate and Congress**
  Two key Texas congressmen in the battle to replace Medicare’s Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula told the American Medical Association House of Delegates they will push to finish the job when Congress reconvenes next week. Reps. Michael Burgess, MD (R-Lewisville), and Kevin Brady (R-The Woodlands) asked for AMA’s help to win final passage of the SGR repeal bill, which stalled earlier this year, in the lame duck session of Congress. Replacing the SGR is one of AMA’s legislative priorities, along with the achieve permanent Medicare-parity in Medicaid payments, repealing the Independent Payment Advisory Board and ICD-10.

- **MAG Resolutions**
  Your delegation brought the following resolutions to the interim meetings. Below is a summary of the outcome of those resolutions.

  - **Preservation of Small Practices.** The AMA reaffirmed current AMA policies D-405.988, H-478.991, and E-47 9.02 in lieu of Resolution 223. The AMA is doing considerable work to remove the regulatory barriers being placed on physicians. AMA has also developed a new platform to assist physicians in their practices - (www.steps-forward.com). More information can be found at [http://www.ama-assn.org/sub/meeting/reportsresolutions.html](http://www.ama-assn.org/sub/meeting/reportsresolutions.html) in the Reference Committee B report annotated.

  - **Transparency and Labeling of Generic Medications.** The AMA Council on Legislation testified that existing AMA policy provides that our AMA will work with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the US
Pharmacopoeia to explore ways to more effectively inform physicians about the bioequivalence of generic drugs, including decisional criteria to determine the bioequivalence of individual products. In light of the foregoing existing policy that covers the goals of Resolution 224, the HOD reaffirmed AMA Policy H-125.984 in lieu of Resolution 224. More information can be found at http://www.ama-assn.org/sub/meeting/reportsresolutions.html in the Reference Committee B report annotated.

- **Creation of AMA Super PAC.** The House of Delegates referred this for further study to the AMA Board of Trustees for a report back to the 2015 Annual Meeting. This resolution was covered in a recent article in http://www.medpagetoday.com/PracticeManagement/Reimbursement/48533 and more information can be found at http://www.ama-assn.org/sub/meeting/reportsresolutions.html in the Reference Committee F report annotated.

- **Cancellation of MOC.** The AMA further amended the principles on MOC and expressly stated that MOC should not be used for licensure, credentialing, reimbursement, network participation or employment. The AMA also wants to eliminate practice performance assessment modules as a part of MOC. For the full policy on MOC, please go to http://www.ama-assn.org/sub/meeting/reportsresolutions.html and go to Reference Committee K report annotated.

- **Other News** (more information can be found at http://www.medpagetoday.com/PracticeManagement/Reimbursement/48533)
  - **Physician unionization.** The Indiana delegation proposed that the AMA study and report back on physician unionization in the U.S. The resolution was approved.
  - **Meaningful use.** The House of Delegates voted to urge policymakers to add more flexibility and shorten the reporting period to help physicians avoid penalties under the government's Meaningful Use program for electronic health records.
  - **Narrow provider networks.** To address the issue of health insurance companies that offer patients very limited choice of healthcare providers, the House of Delegates approved a resolution calling for insurers to only drop providers prior to open enrollment periods so patients won't be stuck in plans that no longer include their preferred providers. They also called for insurers to provide patients with accurate and complete provider directories through multiple media outlets, and for development of a way for patients to file complaints about inadequate networks.
  - **Maternal and paternal leave for medical students and residents.** Delegates voted to amend existing AMA policies on maternal leave to include paternal leave as well, opting to combine both terms into "parental leave."
  - **Stripping an award.** The House of Delegates turned back an effort to strip Ezekiel Emanuel, MD, of his 2013 leadership in medical ethics award from the AMA Foundation.
- Electronic cigarettes. The delegates approved a resolution calling for regulations to set 18 as the minimum age for buying e-cigarettes, to put marketing restrictions on e-cigarette makers, and to prohibit claims that e-cigarettes help people quit smoking.

American Medical Association/MAG Collaboration
During the AMA meeting, we had an opportunity to be on a panel discussing the AMA/MAG collaboration that has resulted in advocacy success in Georgia. In addition, the panel discussed the issues that AMA is addressing at the federal level from SGR, ICD-10, meaningful use. Please see the attached power point outlining the work of the AMA.

MAG Foundation
The Think About It Campaign had an opportunity to be on TopDocs Radio Show this week. Please go to http://www.mag.org/news/articles/tai-topdocs to listen to the recording. Great publicity for the MAG Foundation.

Town Hall Forums
We held two Town Hall Forums this week – Ebola and Medicare Quality Improvement. The recordings can be found at http://www.mag.org/news/articles/ebola-call3-recording (Ebola) and http://www.mag.org/news/articles/medicare-qip-recording (Medicare Quality Improvement).

As always, if you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

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