Dear all:

Please allow this to be an update of MAG activities over the last few weeks. As always, please see http://www.mag.org/resources/executive-directors-message for my previous updates and feel free to pass this along to others.

TOP Docs Radio (Manoj Shah, MD Interview)
Earlier this week, Dr. Shah, MAG President, was on TOP Docs Radio discussing the importance of international medical graduates to our health system. Please take a moment to listen to the recording which can be found at http://www.mag.org/news/articles/topdoc-img.

Physicians Institute for Excellence in Medicine (PIEM)(MAG Subsidiary)
Bob Addleton, Executive Vice President of PIEM, has been elected Vice President of the national organization, Alliance for Continuing Education for the Health Professions, and will be installed as VP in January 2015, at the Annual Conference in Dallas. The office of VP is also President-Elect, so Bob will be serving as President of the Alliance in 2016. This is a great honor for Bob, PIEM and MAG.

Additionally, PIEM is one of 13 health care provider organizations in a collaboration called CO*RE, that has been awarded its second year-long grant to deliver education to clinicians on safer prescribing of extended-release and long-acting (ER/LA) pain medications. The REMS Programming Companies provided this grant to CO*RE in cooperation with the FDA. PIEM is managing educational activities for nine State Medical Societies during 2015. PIEM has also been named a winner of the ACEHP 2015 (Alliance for Continuing Education for the Health Professions) Outstanding Educational Collaboration Award for the Opioid Pain Medications Project, which will be presented at their national meeting.

Recovery Audit Contractors (RAC)
Recovery Audit Contractors in the Medicare program have caused substantial problems for physicians and health care providers. Over the last two weeks, we submitted various letters to CMS to address these issues. One letter was sent from MAG and the another letter was sent by the Physicians Advocacy Institute, an organization for which MAG sits on the board of directors. For more information and to view these letters, please go to http://www.mag.org/news/articles/rac-letters-120914.

JAMA Study Compares APRN and PCP Referrals for Diagnostic Imaging
A study published online in JAMA compares diagnostic imaging ordering patterns between advanced practice clinicians (nurse practitioners and physician assistants) (APCs) and primary care physicians (PCPs) following E/M visits. The study’s authors conclude that APCs are associated with more imaging services than PCPs for similar patients during E&M office visits. Specifically:

- APCs and PCPs ordered imaging in 2.8% and 1.9% episodes of care, respectively.
- In adjusted estimates and across all patient groups and imaging services, APCs were associated with more imaging than PCPs, ordering 0.3% more images per episode.
- APCs were associated with increased radiography orders on both new and established patients, ordering 0.3% and 0.2% more images per episode of care, respectively.
- For advanced imaging, APCs were associated with increased imaging on established patients, ordering 0.1% more images, but were not significantly different from PCPs ordering imaging on new patients.

The study’s authors suggest that, while increased use of imaging appears modest for individual patients, this increase may have ramifications on care and overall costs at the population level. The study is attached for your review.

AMA and the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR)
Once again and after seventeen patches, Congress failed to fix the SGR prior to adjourning. There was some hope that the SGR was going to be addressed in this Congress because of the agreed upon policy that was developed in March of this year. Unfortunately, no progress was made during the “lame duck”
session. Thank you all for making the multiple contacts that we asked. In addition, please see the following message from the AMA - [http://www.mag.org/news/articles/ama-medicare-pay](http://www.mag.org/news/articles/ama-medicare-pay).

**Health Insurance Exchange Specialty Drugs**
Avalere Health has released a report that says that the out-of-pocket costs associated with specialty drugs – “which are often used to treat life threatening illnesses such as cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, or multiple sclerosis” – for the average patient who is covered by the federal health insurance exchange will increase in 2015. The report notes that, “In particular, the incidence of plans charging coinsurance greater than 30 percent for specialty medications [will increase] from 27 percent of Silver plans in 2014 to 41 percent in 2015.” For more information, please go to [http://www.mag.org/news/articles/avalere-drug-costs](http://www.mag.org/news/articles/avalere-drug-costs).

**Immediate Past President – William Silver, MD**
William E. Silver, MD, FACS, recently announced that he has moved his practice to the Atlanta Institute for Facial Aesthetic Surgery, 980 Johnson Ferry Road, Atlanta, Ga 30342, 404-586-4790. He is joining with facial plastic surgeon, Dr. Pradeep Sinha, and will be seeing his current and new patients at this location.

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

Have a great weekend.

Donald

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