

April 1, 2016

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MAG gets great results during 2016 legislative session

The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) enjoyed another stellar legislative session in 2016, according to MAG Council on Legislation (COL) Chair Michael E. Greene, M.D. He reports that state lawmakers passed a number of bills that addressed MAG's legislative priorities for the year, including...

S.B. 158, a health insurance rental networks bill that will result in greater insurer disclosure and transparency and will ensure that physicians get paid their contracted rate in the event their network is leased. This measure will require insurers to register every rental network in the state with the Georgia Department of Insurance. S.B. 158 was the result of a measure (S.R. 561) that legislators passed in 2015 that led to the creation of a study committee. This was MAG's top legislative priority for 2016.

S.B. 302, which will require health insurance companies to maintain more accurate provider directories. This measure will require insurers to update their provider lists every 30 days and maintain those lists in both electronic and paper forms. It was the result of legislation that passed in 2015, including S.R. 561 and S.B. 158.

H.B. 900, which will enhance the state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP). This measure will 1) give physicians the authority to delegate the right to access the PDMP system to staff who are licensed, registered or board-certified health care professionals and 2) allow prescribers and dispensers to communicate with each other about potential abusers and 3) allow individuals who are authorized to access the PDMP system to report instances of misuse or abuse to the patient's primary prescriber.

"We are really pleased with the results of this year's session," says Dr. Greene. "I am proud knowing that MAG played a pivotal role in legislation that will benefit physicians and patients in this state."

He also notes that lawmakers passed a 2017 FY budget (**H.B. 751**) that includes some \$26.2 million to increase the reimbursement rate for select Medicaid primary care and OB-GYN codes, which is up from a \$23 million increase in FY 2016.

MAG Executive Director Donald J. Palmisano Jr. congratulates Dr. Greene, the COL, and MAG Government Relations Director Marcus Downs and his team for a job well done. He says that, "It was another exemplary legislative session, and our staff deserves a lot of credit for their tireless efforts."

MAG President John S. Harvey, M.D., agrees, noting that, "MAG had a productive legislative session, one that will enhance the accessibility of care,

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including preserving Georgia's trauma care and Medicaid systems.”

Dr. Harvey also applauded MAG for taking a leadership role on the patient billing front during this year's session. He says that, “MAG was instrumental in stopping efforts to enact some well-intended but ill-conceived legislation that was meant to address ‘surprise’ or ‘abusive’ billing practices. Lawmakers are, instead, going to take some time and form a study committee and use an evidence-based approach to address some incredibly complex issues.”

Downs emphasizes that, “MAG was focused on building and maintaining its relationships with allied stakeholder groups in the state, which really made key contributions during this year's session. Of course, there is also no way we could have enjoyed this level of success without our member physicians and MAG staff.”

“And,” he points out, “MAG's Board of Directors demonstrated great leadership as we dealt with a wide array of complicated and politically charged bills.”

MAG tracked more than 300 bills in 2016. Gov. Nathan Deal will now determine the fate of the bills that passed.

Contact Downs at 678.303.9280 or mdowns@mag.org with any questions related to the 2016 state legislative session.

While some of the legislation is still subject to a final administrative review, the following is a summary of the bills that were related to MAG's legislative priorities in 2016...

PRESERVING PHYSICIAN AUTONOMY

H.B. 498 by Rep. Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville) would have revised the definition of “professional counseling” by allowing clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists, and licensed counselors to use the term “diagnose” for billing and reimbursement purposes. MAG opposed this legislation because it believes that a diagnosis should be reserved for medical professionals for the sake of patient welfare. It is worth noting that Rep. Hawkins is a dentist. **MAG position:** Opposed. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

H.B. 780 by Rep. Jodi Lott (R-Evans) would have changed the definition of the term ‘clinical laboratory’ in Georgia to exclude laboratories that aren't diagnostic and/or are subject to the federal Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) provisions (i.e., the sole function is to examine human blood or blood components to manufacture of biological products). Sen. Dean Burke, M.D. (R-Bainbridge) introduced a companion bill in the Senate (**S.B. 273**), which did pass. **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

H.B. 775 by Rep. Earl Earhart (R-Powder Springs) will ban non-optometrists and non-ophthalmologists from writing prescriptions or dispensing “spectacles” – keeping in mind the state already has a prohibition on contact lenses. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 944 by Rep. Sheri Gilligan (R-Cumming) would have allowed nurse practitioners and physician assistants to pronounce an organ donor's death if they are under hospice care or in a nursing home. **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

S.B. 319 by Sen. Lester Jackson (D-Savannah) will allow professional counselors to "diagnose" a patient's condition. MAG has consistently opposed this kind of change because it believes that diagnosing a patient's condition should be reserved for medical professionals in order to safeguard patients. **MAG position:** Opposed. **Outcome:** Passed.

MEDICAID

Lawmakers passed a 2017 FY budget (**H.B. 751**) that includes \$26.2 million to increase the reimbursement rate for select Medicaid primary care and OB-GYN codes. This is up from a \$23 million increase in FY 2016. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 823 by Rep. Stacy Abrams (D-Atlanta) called for legislators to take steps to obtain the funds that are available under the Affordable Care Act to expand the Medicaid program in the state. MAG supports reform that 1) ensures the adequacy of payment and 2) reduces administrative burdens and 3) reinforces the physician-patient relationship and 4) promotes quality, including the Patient-Centered Medical Home. MAG will continue to call for the General Assembly to fund the Medicaid Parity Payment Program, it will encourage lawmakers to continue to fund every area of primary care, and it will work with legislators and regulators to develop funding options to provide care for Georgians who are uninsured. It is worth noting that in 2015 MAG's House of Delegates (HOD) passed a resolution (308C.15) that calls for MAG to "explore options to provide health care insurance for Georgia citizens currently falling in the coverage gap." **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

HEALTH INSURANCE & INCREASING ACCESS TO CARE

H.B. 826 by Rep. Betty Price, M.D. (R-Roswell) would have established standards for physicians who state in advertisements that they are certified by any public or private board in any specialty or subspecialty. This bill would have required the ads to include the full name of the certifying board. **MAG Position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

H.B. 684 by Rep. Chuck Martin (R-Alpharetta) would have allowed dental hygienists to clean patients' teeth without a dentist present in certain "safety net" settings (e.g., free clinics) to increase the accessibility of care. Dentists would have maintained their supervisory role. **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

H.B. 952 ('Professional Regulation Reform Act') by Rep. Chad Nimmer (R-Blackshear) will give the governor the authority and duty to "actively supervise" the state's professional licensing boards to ensure that their actions are consistent with state law. The governor will have the authority to review, write, approve or veto any rule before it is filed with the Secretary of State. **MAG position:** Opposed. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 509 by Rep. Jesse Petrea (R-Savannah) was designed to improve the quality of patient-centered and family-focused palliative care. It will establish a Palliative Care and Quality of Life Advisory Council, it will result in a state-wide palliative care information and education program, and it will give physicians more palliative care options. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 555 ('Right to Know Act') by Rep. Joyce Chandler (R-Grayson) will establish a reporting requirement for minors who seek to get an abortion without parental consent. With input from the Georgia OBGyn Society, lawmakers amended the bill so physicians would not be subject to the reporting requirement (i.e., the court system would). **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 710 ('ABLE Act') by Rep. Scot Turner (R-Holly Springs) would have allowed eligible individuals with disabilities to make contributions to tax-exempt accounts to pay for certain qualified expenses like living expenses and housing. This measure would have also created an oversight commission. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Did not pass. H.B. 710's provisions were included in a bill (**H.B. 768**) by Rep. Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville) that did pass. H.B. 768 will also allow eligible individuals who have disabilities to make contributions to tax-exempt accounts to pay for certain qualified expenses (e.g., living expenses and housing). **MAG Position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 853 ('Coverdell-Murphy Act') by Rep. Lee Hawkins (R-Gainesville) will provide additional resources for critical and comprehensive care facilities that provide care for patients who suffer a stroke. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 810 by Rep. Spencer Frye (D-Athens) would have required a party who requests a patient's medical record to pay for the copying and mailing costs. This bill would have also prohibited the entity that was providing the medical record from charging the patient for the service. The requesting party also wouldn't have had to pay any additional cost to obtain the record in electronic form under this bill. **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

H.B. 776 by Rep. Sharon Beasley-Teague (D-Red Oak) would have required health insurers to pay for certain medical procedures that are related to peroral endoscopic myotonic surgical care that is deemed "experimental or investigational." **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

A bill (**H.B. 882**) by Rep. Darlene Talyor (R-Thomasville) was amended to include language that was originally included in **S.B. 265** by Sen. Judson Hill (R-Marietta) that would have allowed physicians to have payment agreements with patients that would be exempt from state insurance laws. **MAG Position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Did Not Pass.

H.B. 902 by Rep. Katie Dempsey (R-Rome) will require assisted living communities to provide educational information about influenza disease. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 910 by Rep. Spencer Frye (D-Athens) will require the state regulations that govern the copying and mailing of medical records to be applied to psychiatric, psychological, and other mental health records. This bill will also make the third party that makes the request responsible for all copying and mailing costs. **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 916 by Rep. Dustin Hightower (R-Carrollton) will give health care providers the opportunity to correct a clerical billing error before they are penalized by the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH). Clerical or record-keeping errors will not constitute fraud or serve as the basis for the recoupment of full payment for the services that are provided. Providers will have 30 days to correct clerical or other errors upon notice, as well as have the opportunity to schedule a hearing to address attempts to withhold reimbursement or recoupment by DCH or its agents to address any or all of their concerns. Any state agency that provides recoupment or reimbursement

to another entity will be prevented from establishing rules that will require full recoupment or withholding of reimbursement for clerical or record-keeping errors. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 1043 by Trey Kelley (R-Cedartown) will exempt hospitals and health systems from having to follow the influenza vaccine protocol in the state. The Senate amended this bill to include language from Sen. Judson Hill's **S.B. 385**, which calls for physicians to display the full name of their certifying board or complete a postgraduate training program in advertisements. This bill is consistent with a policy that MAG's HOD passed in 2015. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 1058 by Rep. Betty Price, M.D. (R-Marietta) will modify HIV/AIDS and STD testing protocols by 1) giving women the right to refuse to be tested and 2) allowing minors to consent to medical treatment if they are at risk of HIV/AIDS and 3) eliminating the requirement for the Georgia Department of Public Health to develop HIV/AIDS counseling brochures and 4) providing that "disclosure to a parent or legal guardian of a minor's AIDS confidential information is permissive rather than mandatory." **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Passed.

S.R. 974 by Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford) will establish a study committee to examine the factors that lead to "surprise" billing – as well as develop ways to avoid the need for the practice. Downs says that, "MAG worked very hard to demonstrate the need for a study rather than an outright bill at this point in the discussion." **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

S.R. 1091 by Sen. Charlie Bethel (R-Dalton) will create a committee to study a wide range of issues that are related to adolescents who are hearing impaired. Downs explains that, "This committee will also look at the need to provide health insurance coverage for children who need hearing aids to combat the high costs associated with special education and alternative treatments." **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Passed.

S.R. 1154 by Sen. Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) will establish a study committee to evaluate the effects of developing Emergency Cardiac Care Centers with certain scientifically validated protocols and procedures to increase the survivability of a cardiac event. **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Passed.

S.R. 1166 by Sen. Marty Harbin (R-Tyrone) will create a study committee to 1) examine the challenges that are faced by small businesses that need to obtain health insurance and 2) the potential for the state to develop and sponsor a self-insured group health insurance plan. "MAG believes that a state small group market plan should be developed to give small businesses access to affordable coverage for their employees," says Downs. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

S.B. 230 by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R- Rome) will allow volunteer health care professionals to render care during natural disasters in the state. In addition to MAG, the Georgia Chapter of the American College of Surgeons was a strong advocate for this bill. The measure does not give health care providers any additional privileges, and professionals are still subject to the rules that govern the Georgia Composite Medical Board. Volunteers will be covered under the state's 'Good Samaritan Act.' Seventeen states have adopted this kind of legislation, including Tennessee. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

S.B. 265 ('Physician Direct Pay Act') by Sen. Judson Hill (R-Marietta) would have allowed physicians to enter into payment agreements with patients that would have been exempt from state insurance laws as long as the "direct

financial relationship” did not exceed \$6,000. The bill was consistent with MAG policy. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

S.B. 271 by Sen. Dean Burke, M.D. (R-Bainbridge) will reduce the involuntary commitment period in the state from 60 days to 40 days. **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Passed.

S.B. 291 (‘Georgia Affordable Free Market Health Care Act’) by Sen. Judson Hill (R-Marietta) was designed to “lower costs and improve access to care while assuring quality services are available.” This bill would have 1) established wellness rewards and incentives and 2) allowed direct patient/physician payment options and 3) addressed out-of-network coverage and 4) addressed ‘any willing provider’ contract issues. **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

S.B. 302 by Sen. P.K. Martin (R-Lawrenceville) will require health insurance companies to maintain more accurate provider directories. It calls for 1) health carriers to post a current and accurate directory for every plan on their websites and 2) insurers to provide a printed and current copy of their directories upon an insured customer or prospective customer’s request and 3) insurers to provide their customers with accurate customer service contact information. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

S.B. 382 by Sen. Renee Unterman (R-Buford) was designed to address “surprise” billing, which occurs when a patient finds out that not all of the health care providers who provide their care at a given facility are included in their health insurance network and they consequently face higher, out-of-network charges. Sen. Unterman will form a committee to study this issue in greater detail, which is action that was endorsed by MAG. **MAG position:** Opposed. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

S.B. 385 by Sen. Judson Hill (R-Marietta) will establish standards for physicians who run advertisements that state that they are certified by any public or private board in any specialty or subspecialty. The certifying board must be a member of the American Board of Medical Specialties, the American Board of Physician Specialties, or the American Osteopathic Association. This bill requires the ads to include the full name of the certifying board. This bill is consistent with a policy that MAG’s HOD passed in 2015. **MAG Position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 649 by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) will create a lactation consultant advisory committee and establish guidelines to license individuals who want to be lactation consultants. MAG’s House of Delegates voted to support this kind of legislation in 2014. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

H.B. 34 by Rep. Mike Dugeon (R-Johns Creek) will give patients the freedom to use experimental drugs that have successfully completed FDA Phase I trials. The patient will be required to consult with their physician and sign a consent form to document that they understand the risks associated with taking the drugs. The patient will also have to exhaust every other option before they take this step. MAG worked with Rep. Dugeon to ensure that physicians will be immune from liability in the event a patient has a negative outcome. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 588 by Rep. Valerie Clark (R-Lawrenceville) will establish a registry for ephedrine and pseudoephedrine products – which can be used to manufacture illegal drugs. The product manufacturers agreed to fund the program in hopes of decreasing drug abuse in the state. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:**

Passed.

H.B. 722 by Rep. Allen Peake (R-Macon) would have expanded the list of patients who can use medical marijuana to include autism, epidermolysis, HIV/AIDS, peripheral neuropathy, Tourette's syndrome, and terminal illness with a probable life expectancy of less than two years if the illness or its treatment produces one or more of the following: severe pain; nausea or severe vomiting; cachexia or severe wasting; post-traumatic stress disorder. **MAG position:** Opposed. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

H.B. 783 by Rep. Bruce Broadrick (R-Dalton) is the annual "pharmacy clean-up" bill, which will ensure that Georgia's code is in sync with the federal government pertaining to the scheduling of narcotics. **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 813 by Rep. Rick Jasperse (R-Jasper) would have allowed a physician to write a prescription for an antibiotic for a patient's partner when the physician has treated the patient for chlamydia, gonorrhea or trichomoniasis. This bill would have shielded physicians who act in good faith from civil or criminal liability. It included language that said that physicians who use this kind of therapy "shall not be deemed as having engaged in unprofessional conduct by their licensing board." **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

H.B. 897 by Rep. Betty Price, M.D. (R-Roswell) will establish a voluntary drug repository program to accept and donate unused prescription medications – excluding controlled substances – for the indigent. Under this bill, "Any person, drug manufacturer, or health care facility [could donate a drug] to a participating pharmacy, hospital, or nonprofit clinic. Recipients of donated drugs may be assessed a handling fee. There is no liability to participants that donate, dispense, or manufacture drugs." All drugs will have to be dispensed as a proper order from a licensed health care provider. It is also worth noting that in Georgia there is no tort or civil liability for donating, accepting, or dispensing drugs under the program if injury, death, or loss to person or property results unless an action or omission constitutes willful and wanton misconduct. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

H.B. 900 by Rep. Sharon Cooper (R-Marietta) will enhance the state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) by 1) allowing crime investigators to obtain a search warrant for the crime scene and 2) giving physicians the authority to delegate the right to access the PDMP system to staff who are licensed, registered or board certified health care professionals and 3) allowing prescribers and dispensers to communicate with each other about potential abusers and 4) allowing individuals who are authorized to access the PDMP system to report instances of misuse or abuse to the patient's primary prescriber. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

The 'Honorable Jimmy Carter Cancer Treatment Access Act' (**H.B. 965**) by Rep. Mike Cheokas (R-Americus) will prevent insurance companies from limiting the coverage of drugs for Stage 4 cancer patients. This bill will allow physicians to prescribe a preferred drug(s) without having to prove to the insurer that other medications failed. In addition, any insurance company that offers health care plans in Georgia will not be able to force patients to respond to other treatments before trying more advanced treatment programs. The bill only applies to health plans that cover the treatment of advanced, metastatic cancer – which typically involves Stage 4 patients in which cancer has spread to other parts of the body. This legislation was inspired by the medical care that former President Jimmy Carter received for his cancer. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

S.B. 115 by Sen. Chuck Hufstetler (R-Rome) would have allowed physician

assistants (PAs) to prescribe a 15-day supply – rather than the current 30-day supply – of Hydrocodone Combination Products (HCPs). **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

S.R. 1165 by Sen. Butch Miller (R-Gainesville) will create a study committee that will look at the causes and effects of opioid use and abuse in Georgia, as well as the actions that need to be taken to save lives. **MAG position:** Supported. **Outcome:** Passed.

OTHER

H.B. 774 by Rep. Alex Atwood (R-St. Simons) would have prohibited the use of fireworks at certain times and in certain places. It would have also given counties and municipalities the authority to require a special permit to use consumer fireworks. **MAG position:** Neutral. **Outcome:** Did not pass.

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MAG president thanks 2016 'Doctor of Day' volunteers

Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) President John S. Harvey, M.D., is expressing his thanks to MAG's 'Doctor of the Day' volunteers for 2016.

Working out of MAG's Medical Aid Station at the Capitol, MAG Doctor of the Day volunteers provide free minor medical care to legislators and their staff for one or more days during the legislative session.

The MAG Doctor of the Day volunteers for 2016 included...

Becky A. Abell, M.D.
Melissa A. Christino, M.D.
Daniel H. Cohen, M.D.
James Crownover, M.D.
Snehal C. Dalal, M.D.
Shamie Das, M.D.
Kelly M. DeGraffenreid, M.D.
Andrew B. Dott, M.D.
Adrian C. Douglass, M.D.
Markesha W. Fleury, M.D.
Erica Y. Francis-Scott, M.D.
G. Waldon Garriss III, M.D.
Laura Garvey, M.D.
Richard D. Gordon Jr., M.D.
Twiggy L. Harris, M.D.
John S. Harvey, M.D.
Rasean T. Hodge, M.D.
Indran B. Indrakrishnan, M.D.
Y. Julia Kao, M.D.
Matthew T. Keadey, M.D.
Bruce M. LeClair, M.D.
Ben Lefkove, M.D.
Matthew L. Lyon, M.D.
Reginald Mason, M.D.
Daniel Most, M.D.
W. Mark Newton, M.D.
LaJune E. Oliver, M.D.
Ramon O. Parrish Jr., M.D.
Ali Rahimi, M.D.
Willie Rainey Jr., M.D.
Aisha W. Redmond, M.D.
Shefali Shah, M.D.
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- George Shokri, M.D. (Telemedicine)
- James L. Smith Jr., M.D.
- Carmen D. Sulton, M.D.
- John L. Sy, D.O.
- James M. Tallman, M.D.
- Marvin D. Tark, M.D.
- Earl H. Thurmond, M.D.
- Helen M. Ward, M.D.
- Thad Wilkins, M.D.
- S. Clifton Willimon, M.D.
- John T. Wright, M.D.

Dr. Harvey is also applauding the medical societies and health care providers that supported MAG's Doctor of the Day program in 2016, including...

- Georgia College of Emergency Physicians
- Georgia Orthopedic Society
- Georgia Partnership for TeleHealth
- MAG Alliance
- Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University
- Southeast Permanente Medical Group, Inc.

Finally, Dr. Harvey is thanking nurse Ruby Butts for supporting the MAG Doctor of the Day volunteers in 2016.

"MAG's Doctor of the Day program is a great way to remind lawmakers that physicians play a vital role in maintaining a healthy and productive workforce in Georgia," says Dr. Harvey. "Of course, it also reinforces MAG's role as the leading voice for physicians in every specialty and practice setting in the state."

The MAG Doctor of the Day volunteers were each recognized in the House and the Senate on the day they served.

Contact Liz Bullock at 678.303.9271 or ebullock@mag.org if you are interested in serving as a MAG Doctor of the Day in 2017.

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'Top Docs' shows on naloxone and diabetes now online



From the left are Dallas Gay, C.W. Hall, and Shonali Saha, M.D.

Recordings of two recent Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) 'Top Docs Radio' shows are now available online.

On March 8, MAG Foundation 'Think About It' campaign Community Chair Dallas Gay and Shonali Saha, M.D. – an adolescent medicine and addiction medicine physician with the Georgia Behavioral Health Professionals practice in Smyrna – addressed naloxone and the state's '9-1-1 Medical Amnesty Law.'

Naloxone reverses the effects of opioid drug overdoses. Physicians in Georgia can prescribe naloxone via a standing order to a person who is at risk of experiencing an opioid overdose. And at their discretion, physicians can prescribe naloxone to pain management clinics, first responders, harm reduction organizations, or family members or friends or other people who are in a position to assist a patient who is at risk of experiencing an opioid overdose.

The 9-1-1 Medical Amnesty Law provides limited immunity for individuals who possess certain drugs and drug paraphernalia when they experience a drug overdose and are in need of medical care, for people who seek medical care for a person who is experiencing a drug overdose, and for certain underage

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drinking offenses for minors who seek medical care during an alcohol overdose.

And on March 23, WellCare of Georgia Senior Medical Director John Alexander Johnson, M.D., discussed the diabetes “epidemic” in the state.

“Diabetes afflicts more than one million Georgians,” says Dr. Johnson. “And estimates project that as many as one in three American adults will have diabetes by 2050.”

Dr. Johnson also addressed the mechanisms that WellCare is using to combat the proliferation of diabetes in the state, including value-based care, telemedicine, field-based case management, and the patient-centered medical home.

WellCare is one of the Medicaid care management organizations in Georgia.

MAG sponsors the ‘Top Docs’ program at 12 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. Between downloads and live listeners, MAG's 'Top Docs' show has reached some 4,000 listeners – which includes people in 47 states and 69 countries.

[Click to listen to Naloxone/9-1-1 Law ‘Top Docs’ show](#)

[Click for Naloxone/9-1-1 Law fact sheet](#)

[Click for ‘Think About It’ campaign website](#)

MAG members can contact MAG Legal Counsel Trish Yeatts at 678.303.9274 or pyeatts@mag.org with questions related to Georgia’s 9-1-1 Medical Amnesty Law. Contact MAG Foundation Program Development Director Lori Cassity Murphy at 678.303.9282 or lmurphy@mag.org to make a donation to the MAG Foundation’s ‘Think About It’ campaign to reduce prescription drug abuse in Georgia.

[Click to listen to WellCare/Diabetes ‘Top Docs’ show](#)

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John Alexander Johnson, M.D. (on the left) with C.W. Hall.

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Efforts underway to revive Floyd-Polk-Chattooga CMS

Efforts are underway to revive the Floyd-Polk-Chattooga County Medical Society (F-P-C CMS). Physicians who are interested in serving as an officer or joining the F-P-C CMS or who have questions should contact Kate Boyenga at 678.303.9263 or kboyenga@mag.org.

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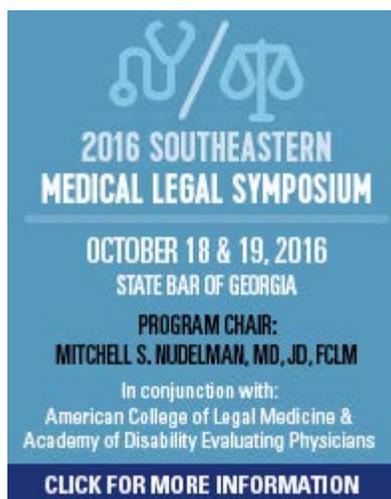
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GAMPAC to host exclusive DC event on April 19-20

GAMPAC will host an exclusive “Fly-In” event for its Chairman’s Circle members (i.e., \$2,500 or more) in Washington, D.C. on April 19-20.

Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) Government Relations Director Marcus Downs says that the itinerary will include a private nighttime tour of the U.S. Capitol that will be hosted by MAG member and U.S. Rep. Tom Price, M.D. The group is also expected to have a chance to meet with a number of U.S. Congressional leaders, including Reps. Lynn Westmoreland, Austin Scott, Tom Graves, Buddy Carter, Rick Allen, Jody Hice and Barry Loudermilk, and Sens. Johnny Isakson and David Perdue.

GAMPAC Chairman’s Circle members include John S. Antalis, M.D., Jim W. Barber, M.D., Thomas E. Bat, M.D., W. Scott Bohlke, M.D., Jack M. Chapman Jr., M.D., S. William Clark, III, M.D., Edmund R. Donoghue Jr., M.D., Matthews W. Gwynn, M.D., Katarina G. Lequeux-Nalovic, M.D., John G. Porter, M.D., Randy F. Rizor, M.D., Manoj H. Shah, M.D., Stanley W. Sherman, M.D., James L. Smith Jr., M.D., Steven M. Walsh, M.D., and the Georgia Orthopaedic Society.

“This is going to be a truly unique life experience,” says Downs. “In addition to providing a behind-the-scenes look at the nation’s capital, it’s a great way for physicians to establish personal, trust-based relationships with their Congressional leaders.”

Downs stresses that attendees will be responsible for their own travel costs.

Contact GAMPAC Manager Kimberly Ramseur at kramseur@mag.org or 678.303.9273 to join the Chairman’s Circle and/or to make arrangements to attend the event.

GAMPAC is MAG’s non-partisan political action committee. It elects pro-physician candidates at the state level. GAMPAC has nearly 400 members.

Go to www.mag.org/organizations/gampac for additional information or to join GAMPAC.

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MAG's 2016 legislative seminar to take place on Jekyll Island



The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) will host a 'Summer Legislative Education Seminar' at The Westin Jekyll Island on Friday, July 29 and Saturday, July 30.

MAG is encouraging its members to call 912.635.4545 and reference the "Medical Association of Georgia" or go to <https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/MAG2016> to obtain a discounted room rate of \$199 per night plus taxes. Note that the discount will only be available until Friday, June 17.

MAG will distribute registration and other information as it becomes available.

Contact Arianna Afshari at aafshari@mag.org with questions.

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How the Physicians Foundation supports physicians

The Physicians Foundation released the following communication on March 10...

In 2015, the Physicians Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, correctly understood that to effectively support practicing physicians with the regulatory and marketplace dynamics altering the face of medicine, it had to modify its strategic focus and orientation to reflect these new realities. As such, the Foundation developed a new strategic plan that focuses on four overarching objectives to support its ultimate goal – to empower physicians to lead in the delivery of high-quality, cost-efficient care. These goals include...

- Fully harness the Foundation's potential for furthering physician leadership and physician-led innovation throughout the country
- Embrace a focused, intentional approach to funding research projects and studies that are timely, actionable and have measurable outcomes
- Significantly increase the visibility of the Foundation and its ability to influence policy
- Build greater organizational capacity for mission success

Under the leadership of [MAG member] Walker Ray, M.D., president of the Physicians Foundation (who was elected as president in April of 2015), the Foundation has undertaken several important initiatives to meet these goals. These initiatives employ a combination of research, grant making and leadership education efforts to strengthen the physician-patient relationship, bolster the voice of practicing physicians and supply policy makers and health care stakeholders with comprehensive tools, resources and insights.

Below is a sampling of the work and achievements of the Foundation over the past year.

Research Initiatives

The Foundation regularly funds research and white papers to provide practicing physicians, state medical societies and policy makers with resources and insights to inform workforce planning, strengthen quality of and access to care and improve the medical practice environment.

Dr. Ray also serves as the committee chair of the Foundation's Research Committee and oversees all funding, project management and report completion. In 2015, the Foundation provided funding to develop a white paper that explored the implications of changing payment models. The report, 'Medicare Watch List' examines the implementation of the Medicare Access

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and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA), enacted after the elimination of the sustainable growth rate (SGR) formula. This report analyzes how physicians may be impacted, including an analysis of the future of Medicare payment models for physicians. The report was broadly distributed to health care media, congressional staffers, state and county medical societies and practicing physicians, among other groups.

To complement the [Biennial Physician Survey](#), a massive research initiative that surveys thousands of doctors from across the country on the most pressing issues they face, the Foundation felt it was critically important to match this research with how the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and other regulatory and marketplace measures are affecting patients. As such, it set up focus groups throughout the country (New York, Chicago and Los Angeles) to garner insights of physicians and patients to better inform the overall shape and focus of its physician and patient surveys. Gary Price, M.D., Board member of the Foundation, has been instrumental in coordinating these efforts.

In 2015, the Foundation provided support and funding to a renowned physician, scientist and researcher, Richard "Buz" Cooper, M.D., to develop a book centered on the role of poverty in medicine, which drives higher costs and negatively influences outcomes. The book has since been completed and will be published by Johns Hopkins University in the fall of 2016. The Foundation understands that in order for patients to receive the best care possible, health care providers, policy makers and patients must better address the social and economic determinants that drive health outcomes. This book is meant to serve as a helpful guide to better understand poverty as it impacts the practice of medicine.

Lastly, as part of the Foundation's focus on alleviating patients' socioeconomic challenges, it has continued its fruitful engagement with 'Health Leads.' Health Leads is a social enterprise that envisions a healthcare system that addresses all patients' basic resource needs as a standard part of quality care. The Foundation has provided significant funding to Health Leads to help build out its organizational capacity and partner with physicians and health care providers to better address the basic resource needs of patients.

Grant-making Activities

Under the leadership of [MAG member] Al Plummer, M.D., vice president of the Physicians Foundation and chair of its Grants Committee, the Foundation has funded diverse grants to drive physician leadership efforts.

In 2015, with the help of treasurer and Board member Robert Seligson, the Physicians Foundation, in partnership with Brandeis University, facilitated a conference focused on building a physician leadership curriculum that helps to empower physicians to navigate today's complex and ever-changing health care system.

The conference brought together a host of academics, practicing physicians and representatives from an array of state and county medical societies. The event focused on advancing the work of physician leaders in the most comprehensive, pragmatic and efficient manner possible. This event, coupled with the

substantial investment the Foundation provides in physician leadership grants to state and county medical societies, reinforces the organization's commitment to excellence in physician leadership.

To better engage and publicize the valuable work of grantees in such areas as physician leadership, workforce, medical practice support and other crucial areas of health care, the Foundation launched a 'Grantee Perspective' page. This platform allows grantees to articulate the value of the work emanating from these grants and provides an opportunity to demonstrate how physician leadership programs can be replicated, as appropriate, in different markets across the U.S.

2016 and Beyond

The Foundation's extensive research and grant making initiatives will continue in 2016 and beyond. A core aspect of the Foundation's work is also to raise awareness of the many challenges that physicians and patients face in today's rapidly changing health care environment. The Foundation's experts and resources are regularly cited in leading national publications (*The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Forbes*) and health trade outlets (*Modern Healthcare*, *HealthLeaders*, *Medscape*).

In addition, Foundation Board members have met with physician media contributors to offer insights and tips on how they report on the medical practice environment. Most recently, Dr. Ray and Dr. Plummer met with Dr. Ford Vox, an Atlanta-based physician and *CNN* contributor. This valuable collaboration will help support the Foundation's broader education and awareness efforts.

The Foundation understands that there is much work to be done. Given the profound changes underway in health care (e.g., transition towards value-based care delivery and payment models, rapid medical consolidation, increased reporting requirements and regulatory oversight), it is more critical than ever to equip practicing physicians with the tools, knowledge and insights necessary to serve as influential leaders. The Foundation will continue to serve as a leading voice for practicing physicians, with the ultimate goal of strengthening the physician-patient relationship and improving the manner in which quality health care is delivered to America's patients.

The Physicians Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that seeks to advance the work of practicing physicians and help facilitate the delivery of healthcare to patients. It pursues its mission through a variety of activities including grant-making, research, white papers and policy studies. Since 2005, the Foundation has awarded numerous multi-year grants totaling more than \$36 million. In addition, the Foundation focuses on the following core areas: physician leadership, physician practice trends, physician shortage issues, and the impact of health care reform on physicians and patients. As the health care system in America continues to evolve, the Foundation is steadfast in its determination to strengthen the physician-patient relationship and assist physicians in sustaining their medical practices in today's practice environment. For more information, please visit www.PhysiciansFoundation.org and follow the Foundation on Twitter at [@PhysiciansFound](https://twitter.com/PhysiciansFound) to stay informed on the latest news.

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Physicians Foundation reminding physicians to take survey

The Physicians Foundation is reminding physicians to take its biennial survey – "one of the largest and most widely referenced physician surveys" in the U.S.

"This is the one national survey that allows physicians to share their perspective on the state of the medical profession," explains Walker Ray, M.D., a MAG member and the president of the Physicians Foundation. "We'd like to hear from as many physicians as possible so we can accurately understand – and share with the public – physicians' perspectives on the most significant issues in medicine and health care today."

Dr. Ray notes that the survey will "allow physicians to share their thoughts on health reform, electronic medical records, new methods of physician reimbursement, ICD-10, and a variety of other topics."

He adds that, "We want physicians to know that their participation is essential for generating awareness about the key challenges facing the physician community today as well as for helping policymakers formulate efficient and effective policies that improve quality of care."

Physicians who complete the survey will receive a final survey report – as well as being entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of five \$500 Amazon gift cards or one \$5,000 Amazon gift card.

Medical Association of Georgia President John S. Harvey, M.D., is also calling for physicians in the state to complete the survey.

He says, "First and foremost, this is an important advocacy effort for our profession – but it is also worth noting that the state medical society for the state that completes the most surveys or the most surveys per capita will receive \$5,000 from the Physicians Foundation."

According to the Physicians Foundation, the survey takes about 10 minutes to complete.

[Click to take survey](#)

The Physicians Foundation is a "national nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that seeks to advance the work of practicing physicians and help facilitate the delivery of health care to patients." Since 2005, it has awarded grants totaling more than \$36 million. It focuses on physician leadership, physician practice trends, physician shortage issues, and health care reform. Go to www.physiciansfoundation.org for additional information.

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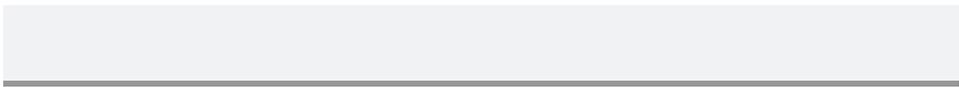
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MAG promoting free adult immunizations workshop

The Medical Association of Georgia is encouraging clinicians and nurses and clinic managers in the state to attend a free education and training workshop that was developed by the Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) – and which is being sponsored by Pfizer, Inc. – to improve adult immunization coverage by increasing the use of standing orders programs (SOPs) in medical practices. The 'Georgia's Take A Stand™' event will take place at the Renaissance Atlanta Waverly Hotel & Convention Center from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Friday, April 15.

The IAC says that, “Strong evidence supports the use of [SOPs] to improve immunization rates in the adult population...use is recommended by numerous public health organizations, federal agencies, and provider associations.”

Yet it adds that, “Unfortunately, standing orders are not being adequately utilized for adult immunizations. Data suggest that adoption of this important intervention is limited due to widespread misunderstandings about the benefits of SOPs and perceived burdens to their implementation. The Take a Stand™ training and education program has been designed to address these challenges.”

The IAC is asking that “no more than two persons from a practice attend, and that one of the two participants be someone who has the practice authority to implement standing orders following the workshop.” It also stresses that practices with less than four clinicians or that are not providing any adult immunizations are not eligible for the program.

The IAC also notes that it is “offering a year of direct support to a practice following its attendance at the workshop.”

The IAC is the “nation’s leading private sector not-for-profit working on the development of education, training, and policy in vaccine preventable diseases.”

The IAC stresses that space for the workshop, which includes lunch, is limited.

[Click for workshop flyer](#)

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MAG applauds physicians on National Doctors' Day



The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) thanked and applauded every physician in the state on National Doctors' Day, which took place on Wednesday, March 30.

“Physicians in every specialty and practice setting provide the residents of this state with the essential medical care they need,” says MAG Executive Director Donald J. Palmisano Jr. “National Doctors’ Day is a great way to honor and recognize these gifted, compassionate, and dedicated individuals.”

The first Doctors’ Day took place in Winder, Georgia in 1933. Eudora Brown Almond, who was the wife of Charles B. Almond, M.D., is credited with founding Doctors’ Day as a way to honor physicians. The U.S. House of Representatives adopted a resolution commemorating Doctors’ Day in 1958, while President George H.W. Bush signed a resolution in 1990 that designated March 30 as National Doctors' Day.

Finally, it is worth noting that March 30 was chosen as Doctors’ Day because it was the date that Crawford W. Long, M.D., from Jefferson, Georgia, administered the first ether anesthetic for surgery in 1842.

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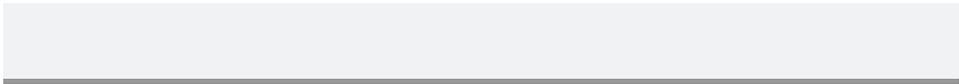
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MAG welcomes new membership coordinator



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Dawn Williams recently joined the Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) as its membership coordinator. She will be responsible for processing membership applications and dues payments.

"We are really excited to have Dawn join our team," says MAG Membership Director Kate Boyenga. "She has some great experience in the administration and customer service arenas."

Boyenga adds that, "Dawn is detail-oriented, she takes a lot of pride in her work, and I am confident that she is going to create instant and significant value for MAG and its member physicians."

Williams is a graduate of Morgan State University in Maryland, where she concentrated on television production.

MAG members can contact Williams at dwilliams@mag.org or 678.303.9261.

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Golf tournament to raise funds for MAG Foundation

The Medical Association of Georgia Foundation is encouraging MAG members to register for the fourth 'Jeffrey Gay Memorial Golf Classic,' which will take place at the Apple Mountain Golf Course in Clarkesville on May 14.

The event will raise funds for the MAG Foundation's 'Think About It' campaign to reduce prescription drug abuse in the state and the We Care Foundation, which supports needy children in Hall County.

The tournament will begin with a shotgun start at 12 p.m. The \$75 entry fee covers greens fees and a cart and dinner from Johnny's BBQ.

Contact Hilda Shockley at 770.536.3922 with questions or to register.

The tournament is a memorial tribute to Jeffrey Gay – the grandson of the MAG Foundation 'Think About It' campaign Community Co-chair Dallas Gay – who lost his life to prescription drug abuse in 2012.

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GDC cites article on rising Rx drug costs

The Georgia Drug Card has flagged a *Tech Times* article that says that the largest pharmacy benefit management firm in the U.S. reports that “spending on prescription drugs for insured Americans went up about 5.2 percent last year, pushed by both higher prices and greater medication use.”

According to the article, Express Scripts Holding Co. says the increase was “mainly seen in very expensive drugs called specialty medicines, which includes new treatments for Hepatitis C and older drugs for multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis.”

The Express Scripts report was “based on 85 million insured patients’ prescription drug spending, which is provided by employers, state and local governments, unions, and Affordable Care Act insurance exchanges.”

The Medical Association of Georgia is consequently reminding physicians that their patients who have high-deductible plans or who do not have prescription coverage or who take prescription drugs that aren’t covered by their health insurance plan can use the Georgia Drug Card to obtain savings of up to 75 percent off the retail price for brand and generic FDA-approved medications.

Georgians can print the Georgia Drug Card for free at www.GeorgiaDrugCard.com, they can request the Georgia Drug Card savings at any CVS/pharmacy in the state, or they can request a hard card by sending an email to John Cenerazzo at johnc@georgiadrugcard.com.

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News Briefs

New program helps clinicians move to quality-based pay

Alliant Quality is promoting the ‘Transforming Clinical Practice Initiative’ (TCPI), which is a “four-year program [that] seeks to aide more than 150,000 clinicians to shift from a volume-based to quality-based payment system.”

An Alliant Quality flyer says that, “Significant changes in Medicare payments are coming in 2019 based on your performance in 2017. The time to act is now. Medicare has invested over \$800 million to provide the support for you to transform your practice in order to prepare for this change in your Medicare payments.”

It adds that, “The TCPI model will assist clinicians in improving the way they deliver care by providing technical assistance support for integrating quality and process improvement, and by building on and spreading existing change methodologies, practice transformation tools, published literature, and technical assistance programs. Clinicians that will be supported by TCPI include primary and specialty physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, clinical pharmacists, and their practices.”

Alliant Quality’s activities include “practice assessments, technical assistance, collaboration with the Practice Transformation Networks (PTN), and recruitment of small/rural practices into the PTN.”

The following PTN serve Georgia...

[Compass](#)

[Consortium for Southeastern Hypertension Control](#)

[National Rural Accountable Care Consortium](#)

[Vizient](#)

Contact Donna Cohen at 678.527.3681 or donna.cohen@alliantquality.org with questions.

Alliant Quality is a Medicare Quality Improvement Organization.

[Click for TCPI flyer](#)

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News Briefs

Report says practices spend \$15B a year on quality metrics

The Physicians Foundation provided a grant that was used to fund a report that was developed by Lawrence Casalino, M.D., that determined that “physician practices spend \$15.4 billion annually on quality reporting measures.” The Physicians Foundation says that, “While quality reporting metrics are not going away anytime soon, policy makers, health plans and EHR vendors must take steps to alleviate these onerous reporting requirements.”

[Click for 'Health Affairs' article on report](#)

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News Briefs

CMS releases 2016 CMS QRDA Implementation Guide

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has published the 2016 CMS Quality Reporting Document Architecture (QRDA) Implementation Guide (IG) for Eligible Professional Programs and Hospital Quality Reporting Appendix (Version 1.0, February 26, 2016).

CMS says that, "This is the Appendix to the 2016 CMS QRDA IG that was published on July 8, 2015. The 2016 CMS QRDA IG provides implementation guidance for the 2016 reporting period for submitting QRDA Category I (QRDA-I) and/or QRDA Category III (QRDA-III) files to the CMS EP and HQR programs."

[Click for 2016 CMS QRDA Implementation Guide](#)

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News Briefs

CMS resource helps practices check ICD-10 progress

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has released a new infographic that is based on its 'Next Steps Toolkit' that is designed to help medical practices analyze their ICD-10 progress. CMS says that, "By tracking and comparing key performance indicators, you can assess your progress, address your findings, and maintain your progress."

[Click for CMS infographic](#)

[Click for CMS 'Next Steps Toolkit'](#)

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News Briefs

GCT2 promoting BP management, QI webinars

The Georgia Clinical Transformation Team (GCT2) is promoting a monthly series of free 30-minute webinars that are “focused on quality improvement in your practice.”

This includes a ‘Teachings & Tools for Correct Blood Pressure Management’ webinar that will take place from 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday, April 27.

The Medical Association of Georgia is one of GCT2’s partners.

Contact Angela Flanigan at aflanigan@gafp.org or 404.321.7445 with questions.

[Click for GCT2 webinar series flyer](#)

[Click to register for a GCT2 webinar\(s\)](#)

[Click for GCT2 ‘Teachings & Tools for Correct Blood Pressure Management’ webinar flyer](#)

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News Briefs

Georgia POLST Collaborative to meet in April

The Georgia POLST Collaborative is encouraging physicians and other health care providers to register for its fourth annual conference, which will take place at the Atlanta Marriott Century Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursday, April 28.

Speakers will include Alvin “Woody” Moss, M.D., the co-founder of the National POLST Paradigm Task Force, and Amy Vandenbroucke, the director of the Center of Health Ethics & Law at West Virginia University.

Early bird registration is \$135 per person.

Contact Lynne Kernaghan at kernaghanL@cox.net with questions.

[Click for registration and other details](#)

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News Briefs

MSM names new National Center for Primary Care director

The Morehouse School of Medicine recently distributed the following press release...

Morehouse School of Medicine has named Dominic Mack, M.D., as the new director of the school's National Center for Primary Care (NCPC), the nation's first congressionally sanctioned center to develop programs that strengthen the primary care system for health equity and sustainability. A family physician and longtime proponent of electronic health records, Dr. Mack has been serving as the co-director of the NCPC since June 2013. He will now pilot NCPC's work in expanding its current portfolio, which includes an estimated \$21 million in grant funds.

"Dr. Dominic Mack's work to expand essential technology resources has been a valuable tool in Morehouse School of Medicine's vision to lead the creation and advancement of health equity," said President and Dean Valerie Montgomery Rice, M.D. "As our new director, he will continue to expand the reach and impact of the National Center for Primary Care, which will serve to help more underserved communities."

Dr. Mack, who is also an associate professor at MSM, previously served as co-director of the NCPC with Dr. George Rust, who now serves as director of the Center for Medicine and Public Health at Florida State University College of Medicine. Dr. Mack practiced for 11 years at Southside Community Health Center in Atlanta, where he served as chief medical officer during his tenure, then joined MSM in 2001 as an assistant professor in the department of family medicine. While at MSM, he has served as medical director, interim residency director for the department of family medicine and later became associate chair of clinical affairs.

Dr. Mack received his Bachelor of Science degree from Paine College and his Doctor of Medicine degree from Meharry Medical College in Nashville. In 2003, he graduated from Kennesaw State University with a Master of Business Administration.

The mission of the NCPC is to promote excellence in community-oriented primary health care and optimal outcomes for all Americans, with a special focus on underserved populations and eliminating health disparities. The NCPC provides training for primary care practitioners, conducts both population-level and practice-based research to improve health outcomes,

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and shares protocols and tools for improving primary care effectiveness in culturally diverse settings.

Founded in 1975, Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) is among the nation's leading educators of primary care physicians, biomedical scientists, and public health professionals. In 2011, MSM was recognized by Annals of Internal Medicine as the nation's No. 1 medical school in fulfilling a social mission. MSM faculty and alumni are noted for excellence in teaching, research and public policy, as well as exceptional patient care.

Morehouse School of Medicine is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award doctoral and master's degrees. For more information, please visit www.msm.edu.

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News Briefs

CDC releases 2016 opioids prescribing guideline

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released its 'Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain — United States, 2016.' CDC says that, "This guideline provides recommendations for primary care clinicians who are prescribing opioids for chronic pain outside of active cancer treatment, palliative care, and end-of-life care.

[Click for CDC 'Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain'](#)

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News Briefs

IMS Health says opioid prescribing was down in 2015

The American Medical Association (AMA) reports that every state saw a decrease in the number of opioid analgesics prescriptions that were filled in 2015, according to data from IMS Health.

AMA says that, "This information, which reflects the activity of physicians and other health care professionals, shows that nationally there was a 6.8 percent decrease in the total number of prescriptions for opioid analgesics in 2015 (227,780,915) compared to 2014 (244,462,567)." The decrease in Georgia from 2014 to 2015 was 5.1 percent.

AMA adds that, "There also was a 2.9 percent decrease nationwide in 2014 compared to 2013 (251,814,805) when all but four states saw decreases in 2014. The rate of change from 2013 to 2015 was -10.6 percent."

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OCTOBER 18 & 19, 2016
STATE BAR OF GEORGIA

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News Briefs

New Grant Park (Atlanta) clinic seeks physician volunteers

The Georgia Volunteer Health Care Program (GVHCP) is seeking physicians to volunteer to care for needy patients at a new clinic that will be opened in Atlanta's Grant Park area. The clinic – at 645 Grant Street SE – will be situated in a food cooperative that will be operated by the Georgia Avenue Community Ministry.

According to the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), “[the GVHCP] provides Sovereign Immunity protection to licensed health care professionals who volunteer to treat uninsured individuals at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level...goal is to increase access to quality health care for underserved Georgians through volunteerism and state-sponsored liability protection...benefits for volunteering for this program include continuing education credits, relationship building in your community and more importantly saving lives.”

Physicians who are interested in volunteering at the new clinic should contact Susan Porter Whatley at 404.583.8289 or susanw.uhw@gmail.com.

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ABC seeking nominations for 'Health Care Heroes Awards'

The Atlanta Business Chronicle is seeking nominations for its 19th annual *Health Care Heroes Awards*. The winners will be featured in a special section of the paper on May 13. The deadline to submit nominations is Thursday, April 7.

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News Briefs

Carter Center to host mental health forum

The Carter Center Mental Health Program is encouraging physicians to attend the annual 'Rosallynn Carter Georgia Mental Health Forum,' which will take place at The Carter Center in Atlanta on May 20.

The group says that this year's program will feature an "update on the settlement agreement between the U.S. Department of Justice and the State of Georgia" and talks on the "treatment needs of young children with ADHD" and "child and adolescent mental health issues" in the state.

The cost to attend the event is \$25. Lunch will be provided. Call 404.420.5165 with questions.

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