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## AMA acts on key issues during its annual meeting

The Georgia delegation reports that the American Medical Association's (AMA) House of Delegates (HOD) took action on a number of important issues during its annual meeting in Chicago in June.

The HOD passed a measure that the Georgia delegation submitted – AMA Resolution 404 (item #8 in Reference Committee D) – which calls for “AMA to encourage vaccine manufacturers to make small quantities of vaccines available for purchase without financial penalty to help small practices maintain a comprehensive vaccine inventory.”

The HOD also...

- Adopted a modernized 'Code of Medical Ethics' that is designed to 1) become more relevant (i.e., apply to contemporary medical practice) and 2) provide greater clarity (i.e., a better structure and format to ensure that the “foundational ethical principles and specific physician responsibilities are easy to find, read and apply”) and 3) improve consistency (i.e., “harmonized guidance that consolidates related issues into a single, comprehensive statement”).
- Adopted a policy to support efforts to ensure that there is sufficient funding for medical residency positions. This measure also calls for “transparency in the actual costs of residency programs and how Graduate Medical Education (GME) funding is distributed to address physician shortages in undersupplied specialties.”
- Called for the pharmaceutical industry to fund a program to dispose of unwanted medications as hazardous waste – keeping in mind that an estimated 30 percent to 80 percent of patients do not finish prescriptions for common medication, including pain medication.
- Called for parity laws to require private insurers to cover telemedicine-provided services at levels that are comparable to that of in-person services.
- Recommended that TV advertisements that warn viewers about the dangers associated with pharmaceuticals should also encourage those viewers to consult with a physician before they discontinue any medications.
- Adopted a policy to support the American Board of Preventive Medicine's (ABPM) “establishment of addiction medicine as a multispecialty-sponsored subspecialty” – which has also been approved by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) and will be available to qualified physicians who are diplomates of any of the 24 ABMS member boards. The new policy also encourages ABPM to “expeditiously offer the first addiction medicine certification examination to physicians.”
- Voted to support legislation to remove all sales tax on feminine hygiene products.
- Adopted a policy that calls for physical therapists and other non-physicians who practice dry needling to, as a minimum, have training, certification and

continuing education standards that are similar to the ones that exist for acupuncture.

– Support efforts to educate consumers on the safety benefits of wearing protective eyewear when they use air guns. “Non-powder guns” (e.g., paint ball and air guns) are a leading cause of serious pediatric eye injuries, which are up 600 percent since 2010.

– Called for legislation repealing mandatory certification by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) or other certifying organizations for physician specialties that require a high stakes recertification exam.

– Voted to oppose the Veterans Health Administration's recently proposed rule that “would give full authority to four categories of APRNs: Certified Nurse practitioner (CNP), Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA), Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), or Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM),” allowing them to practice independent of physician supervision within the VA System. [Click here](#) to submit comments on the proposed rule.

– Adopted a MAG resolution from last year to remove financial barriers to Medicare patients wishing to participate in clinical trials.

Andrew W. Gurman, M.D., an orthopedic hand surgeon from Pennsylvania, was sworn into office as AMA’s president. He said that he will “focus his tenure on advancing the AMA’s three strategic focus areas to improve health outcomes for Americans living with pre-diabetes and hypertension, accelerating change in medical education and prepare students for today’s health care system, and enhancing physician satisfaction and practice sustainability.”

Atlanta psychiatrist and MAG member Patrice A. Harris, M.D., was installed as the new chair of AMA’s Board of Trustees. She is the first African-American woman to hold the office. The chair-elect is Gerald E. Harmon, M.D., a family physician from South Carolina.

William Clark, M.D., is the chair of Georgia’s AMA delegation, while Sandra B. Reed, M.D., is the vice chair. Dr. Clark is urging MAG members to join the AMA. He says, "The Georgia AMA delegation recommends that MAG members join the AMA now in order to strengthen its efforts on physicians' behalf at the national level of medical policy decision making."

Physicians can go to <https://commerce.ama-assn.org/membership> to learn more about AMA membership.

MAG members can contact MAG Executive Director Donald J. Palmisano Jr. at [dpalmisano@mag.org](mailto:dpalmisano@mag.org) with questions related to the AMA meeting.

[Click for top stories from 2016 AMA Annual Meeting](#)

[Click for final actions of 2016 AMA Annual Meeting](#)

[Click for details on Georgia’s AMA delegation](#)

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### MAG names new government relations director



The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) has announced that Derek Norton will become its director of Government Relations on July 1.

“We are genuinely excited to have Derek lead MAG’s legislative advocacy efforts,” says MAG Executive Director Donald J. Palmisano Jr. “He has a great resume, including more than 10 years with associations and a proven track record for building successful political action committees.”

Norton explains that, “I have always had a tremendous amount of respect for physicians for the essential care they provide, MAG has a great reputation, and health care is a critical social issue – so I am honored, and I am really looking forward to this great opportunity.”

He adds that, “In the short term, I am going to focus on getting to know MAG’s members and becoming familiar with its issues. My longer-term goal is to solidify MAG’s already-formidable position as the leading advocate for the medical profession in Georgia – as well as increasing GAMPAC membership.”

Norton is “confident that [he] will be able to create value for MAG on day one given [his] experience and the long-standing relationships [he has] built at the State Capitol.”

Between 2006 and 2016, he held several leadership roles for the Atlanta and Georgia Apartment Association – including director and vice president of Governmental Affairs.

He also worked for U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson as a legislative aide and political director, and it is worth noting that he was elected to serve on the Smyrna City Council in 2015.

Norton has a degree in international business from the University of Georgia.

He lives in Smyrna with his wife and daughter, Laura and Samantha.

MAG members can contact Norton at [dnorton@mag.org](mailto:dnorton@mag.org) or 404.274.4210.

Norton replaces Marcus Downs, who recently became the executive director of the Georgia Nurses Association.

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## Key stakeholders join MAG in opposing mega mergers

A number of key stakeholders have joined the Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) in opposing the proposed Anthem-Cigna and Aetna-Humana mergers – including a group of leading U.S. Senators who have called for the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to block the deals.

In a June 22 letter to DOJ, the senators said that they believe the mergers will “increase premium prices and health care costs for consumers and businesses, reduce competition and consumer choice, and decrease access to quality of care.”

They also stressed that, “Past health insurance mergers have led to significant premium increases for the consumers of the merging companies...[and consolidation] is also linked to lower-quality insurance products, less innovation, and higher patient mortality rates.”

Finally, the Senators pointed out that, “These mergers would take place against the backdrop of an already concentrated insurance market.”

Meanwhile, California Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones recently “urged [DOJ] to block the merger deal between Anthem, Inc., and Cigna Corporation.”

A June 16 press release from his office said that, “After an extensive review of the Anthem and Cigna merger, Commissioner Jones issued detailed findings that the merger of the second and fourth largest national health insurers is anti-competitive and will harm California consumers, businesses, and the California health insurance market.”

The commissioner also “found that if the merger moves forward, Anthem's market share will exceed 50 percent in 28 California counties and 40 percent in 38 counties, which will negatively impact California consumers with likely reductions in access, quality of care, and affordability of health insurance.”

And the Missouri Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions and Professional Regulation recently issued an order that says that the proposed merger between Aetna and Humana would violate competitive standards and that the health insurers would not be allowed to conduct business in the state if the merger goes through – though the companies will be given additional time to propose corrective action.

MAG expects Georgia’s Office of Insurance to schedule a hearing on the subject in the near future.

Contact MAG Executive Director Donald J. Palmisano Jr. at [dpalmisano@mag.org](mailto:dpalmisano@mag.org) with questions related to MAG's advocacy efforts.

[Click for U.S. Senators' letter](#)

[Click for Commissioner Jones' press release](#)

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## MAG, AMA two of 100+ groups to weigh in on MACRA proposal

The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) is one of more than 100 state and national physician advocacy organizations that signed a detailed letter that was sent to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to submit comments on its notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) that is related to the implementation of the Medicare Access and Chip Reauthorization Act (MACRA).

The June 24 correspondence says that physicians are “strongly committed to a successful MACRA launch.”

The letter also explains that the physician groups hope to “simplify the proposed MIPS (Merit-Based Incentive Payment System) program to ensure that it facilitates meaningful opportunities for performance improvement while decreasing administrative and compliance burdens” and to “provide a more robust APM (Alternative Payment Models) pathway that can support physicians who want to make the transition to new delivery and payment models” and to “accommodate the needs of physicians in rural, solo, or small practices in order to enhance their opportunities for success and avoid unintended consequences.”

[Click for MAG letter](#)

On June 27, the American Medical Association (AMA) sent its own letter to CMS with its final comments on the MACRA proposal. The AMA recommends 1) implementing a transitional reporting period in 2017 that starts no sooner than July 1 and 2) providing more flexibility for solo physicians and small group practices and 3) giving physicians more timely and actionable feedback on their performance reports. And it says that within the letter “many specific recommendations are made for simplifying the proposed MIPS requirements to reduce administrative burdens and for enabling more physicians to participate in alternative payment models.”

The AMA says that its dialogue with [Obama] administration officials is ongoing, as well as [its] outreach with Congress.

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## MAG, OB-GYN groups file brief to support medical practice

The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) recently joined the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and the Georgia Obstetrical and Gynecological Society in filing an amicus brief to support the Atlanta Women's Health Group in a lawsuit that is pending in the State Court of DeKalb County.

MAG General Counsel Trish Yeatts reports that the case – *T'Miaya Smith and Jamaal Hayes, Sr. v. Northside Hospital, Inc., Lauren Braswell, RN and Atlanta Women's Health Group, PC* – involves a delivery that occurred in 2010.

She says that, "The brief is focused on the importance of keeping bad science out of the courtroom and limiting the effect that frivolous lawsuits have on the health care system, particularly the specialty of obstetrics and gynecology."

Yeatts also stresses that the brief supports a MAG policy (265.884) that states that the "physician [who is] serving as an expert witness should present the court with those opinions which represent the broad spectrum of medical thought and practice...[the] expert should honestly describe where his or her opinions vary from common practice...[and the] expert should not present his or her own views as the only correct ones if they differ from what might be done by other physicians."

MAG members can contact Yeatts at [pyeatts@mag.org](mailto:pyeatts@mag.org) or 678.303.9274 with questions.

[Click for amicus brief](#)

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### Remember to plan for MAG's HOD, legislative meetings

The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) is reminding its members to make plans to attend two key meetings, including...

- MAG's 'Summer Legislative Education Seminar,' which will take place at The Westin Jekyll Island on Friday, July 29 and Saturday, July 30
- MAG's House of Delegates (HOD) meeting, which will take place at the Hyatt Regency in Savannah on Saturday, October 15 and Sunday, October 16. (MAG's Board of Directors will meet at the Hyatt on the afternoon of Friday, October 14.)

The legislative seminar will feature sessions on out-of-network billing, how to address Georgia's uninsured patient population, and the pending Aetna/Humana & Anthem/Cigna mergers. The meeting will also include an update on health care policy developments at the federal level. Some 25 state legislators - as well as Georgia Insurance Commissioner Ralph Hudgens - are expected to attend this event.

MAG members can contact Shakira Walker at 912.319.2855 or [shakira.walker@westinjekyllisland.com](mailto:shakira.walker@westinjekyllisland.com) and mention the "Medical Association of Georgia" to obtain the best available room rate at the Westin Jekyll Island.

Meanwhile, HOD meeting attendees who need assistance with accommodations in Savannah should contact Anita Amin at [aamin@mag.org](mailto:aamin@mag.org) or 404.299.7700.

[Click to register for MAG's 'Summer Legislative Education Seminar'](#)

[Click for agenda for MAG's 'Legislative Seminar'](#)

[Click for details on MAG's HOD](#)

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### MAG flagging key HOD deadlines

The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) is stressing that resolutions and annual reports for this year’s HOD meeting must be submitted by the end of the day on **Wednesday, August 31**.

“MAG employs a democratic process,” says MAG Executive Director Donald J. Palmisano Jr. “We rely on the input of our member physicians to establish MAG’s policies, and this policy work is addressed at our annual House of Delegates meeting.”

He explains that HOD resolutions can be submitted by a CMS or state specialty society delegate or any HOD delegate who agrees to present an item of business.

Palmisano also notes that MAG directors and officers must prepare an annual report for the 2016 MAG HOD. He says these reports should include 1) meeting dates 2) activities and 3) a current list of directors. Alternate directors, meanwhile, are required to assist in the preparation of these reports as a bylaws requirement.

Resolutions and annual reports must be submitted in a Microsoft Word document format to Palmisano at [dpalmisano@mag.org](mailto:dpalmisano@mag.org) by the end of the day on Wednesday, August 31 to be included in the HOD delegates’ handbook. That cutoff date is especially relevant for resolutions that are related to MAG’s Constitution and Bylaws given a 45-day bylaws requirement.

MAG will confirm the receipt of resolutions that are submitted with an email reply, but Palmisano emphasizes that, “If a delegate or director or an officer does not receive such an e-mail, their report will not have been considered received.”

Go to [www.mag.org/about-us/house-of-delegates](http://www.mag.org/about-us/house-of-delegates) or contact Palmisano at [dpalmisano@mag.org](mailto:dpalmisano@mag.org) with questions related to HOD resolutions.

MAG is also reminding county medical society (CMS) presidents and secretaries and executives to submit a list of their delegates and alternate delegates for the HOD meeting by the end of the day on **Friday, September 2**.

[Click for HOD delegate/alternate form](#)

Contact Kate Boyenga at 678.303.9263 or [kboyenga@mag.org](mailto:kboyenga@mag.org) with any questions related to HOD delegates/alternates.

Finally, CMS presidents and secretaries and executives should submit the names of any new directors or alternate directors for MAG’s Board of Directors to Donna Glass at [dglass@mag.org](mailto:dglass@mag.org).

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### Deadline for MAG awards is July 29

The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) is reminding county medical society and specialty society leaders and MAG members to nominate the individuals that they believe deserve to be recognized for their contributions to the medical profession for MAG's annual awards, which will be presented at MAG's HOD meeting on Saturday, October 15.

Nominations for the *Lamartine Hardman Cup*, the *Joseph P. Bailey Jr., M.D., Physician Distinguished Service Award*, and the *John B. Rabun Award* must be submitted by a county medical society. The *Jack A. Raines, M.D., Humanitarian Award*, the *Donna Glass Non-Physician Distinguished Service Award*, and the *Physician's Award for Community Service* nominations may be submitted by a county medical society or an individual member.

Sponsors must complete the '[Online Nomination Form](#)' by 5 p.m. on Friday, July 29. Sponsors may also submit optional supporting documents (e.g., letters, articles, CV) to Samantha Grantham at [sgrantham@mag.org](mailto:sgrantham@mag.org) by the deadline on July 29. Nominations that are mailed through the U.S. postal system will not be accepted. The MAG Awards Committee will accept re-nominations.

Contact Grantham at [sgrantham@mag.org](mailto:sgrantham@mag.org) with questions.

[Click for list of past award recipients](#)

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## MAG to host medical student abstract competition

The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG) will host a medical student abstract competition for MAG student members in conjunction with its annual House of Delegates meeting – an event that will take place at the Hyatt Regency Savannah on Saturday, October 15.

The competition will have four categories, including basic science/bench work, clinical research, public health, and case studies.

Just one winner will be selected in each category, and the winning abstracts will be published in the *Journal of the Medical Association of Georgia*.

Every student will also be given the opportunity to participate in a “Best Pitch Competition,” where they will have 45 seconds to “pitch” a panel of physician judges. The winner of this competition will be featured on MAG’s website.

Contest details...

- The deadline for the abstracts of 350 words or less is the end of the day on Friday, September 9.
- The contest is open to every MAG member student in every class in every medical school in the state.
- Submissions are limited to one abstract per primary author.
- Acceptance emails that include additional details will be distributed by September 21.
- Contestants must set up their poster exhibits in the lobby of the Hyatt Regency Savannah no later than 12 p.m. on Saturday, October 15.

The posters should...

- Not exceed 36 inches by 48 inches.
- Include a title in all capital letters that is brief and clearly states the abstract’s content.
- List the presenting author’s name first.
- List the name and just one degree (e.g., BA or MPH or M.D.) for each author.
- List names of the authors’ institution(s), city, and state.

Participants must attend the meeting in Savannah, they must set up their posters, and they must be a MAG student member.

[Click for MAG student membership application](#)

Contact Dayna Jackson at [djackson@mag.org](mailto:djackson@mag.org) to register or with questions.

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## 'Top Docs' shows on manners, opioid abuse & MACRA now online



*Dr. Barry Silverman, on the left, with 'Top Docs Radio' host C.W. Hall.*

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

On June 14, Barry Silverman, M.D., and Saul Adler, M.D., discussed a book that they wrote on the need for manners and civility.

"We believe that the book 'Your Doctors' Manners Matter' holds great value for both patients and physicians," Dr. Silverman said. "It describes what common courtesies and manners patients should expect from their health care providers, and vice versa, and how failing to meet these expectations can result in lower quality and increase the cost of care."

The Northside Hospital cardiologist added that, "Good manners are about respect, communication, being dutiful, caring, benevolence, and understanding. These are all critical values in an accomplished doctor."

According to Dr. Adler, "The book addresses a number of important issues, including why manners matter, how rude and uncivil behavior can result in bad outcomes, and what a patient should expect when they are in their doctor's office."

Dr. Silverman is a long-time member of the *Journal of the Medical Association of Georgia's* editorial board. Dr. Adler founded the pediatric ICU in the Scottish Rite Campus at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

It is worth noting that Dr. Silverman worked with MAG and the MAG Foundation to make the book available to every first year medical student in the state for free.

And on the June 28 'Top Docs' show, Patrice A. Harris, M.D., M.A., the chair of the American Medical Association's (AMA) Board of Trustees and the chair of

AMA's Task Force to Reduce Opioid Abuse, discussed the steps that AMA is taking to address the nation's opioid drug abuse epidemic as well as the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA).

"More than 40 Americans die from an opioid overdose every day, while many more become addicted," Dr. Harris said. "AMA is consequently committed to working on a long-term, multi-pronged public health approach to end the opioid abuse epidemic in America."

The MAG member and Atlanta-based psychiatrist explained that, "A key part of AMA's initiative is to encourage physicians to register for and use their state prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs), which can turn the tide to end opioid abuse."

And she stressed that, "AMA will also continue to work with the Obama administration and Congress to develop balanced approaches to end prescription opioid abuse, it will support state and federal efforts to modernize and fund PDMPs, and it will promote safe, effective and evidence-based prescribing within the medical profession."

During her appearance, Dr. Harris also discussed MACRA – which was the catalyst for Medicare's new "quality payment program."

MAG sponsors the 'Top Docs' program at 12 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. Listeners can go to <https://twitter.com/TopDocsOnBRX> to submit questions to 'Top Docs' host C.W. Hall during the program. Between downloads and live listeners, MAG's 'Top Docs' show has reached more than 6,000 listeners – which includes people in all 50 states and 84 countries.

[Click for 'Top Docs' show on manners](#)

[Click for 'Top Docs' show on opioid abuse/MACRA](#)

[Click to order 'Your Doctors' Manners Matter'](#)

[Click to register for Georgia PDMP](#)

[Click for AMA Task Force to Reduce Rx Opioid Abuse](#)

[Click for MAG 'MACRA' web page](#)



*Dr. Patrice Harris*



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## Medical innovation: Necessity is the mother of all invention

*By Lance M. Black, M.D., Medical Affairs Manager, Global Center for Medical Innovation*

Necessity is the mother of all invention.

We have all heard this proverb, and most of us have likely used it when we referred to something that we proudly created in the garage, kitchen, or at work.

So when is the last time that you were in the operating room and were frustrated with the way a surgical tool did (or did not) work or you were in the clinic seeing a patient and said to yourself, "There has to be a better way of doing this."?

The most common question I hear from physicians who are trying to bring an idea to life is, "Where do I start?"

Let's begin with the "Voice of the Customer" (VOC). Remember that it is possible that the aforementioned frustration that spawned your great solution may not be a problem for everyone. So it is imperative for you, the inventor, to remove yourself from your own experience and determine if the problem is truly widespread (i.e., is there going to be critical mass?)

For instance, let's assume that you have always felt like it was risky for your patients when you inserted an inaugural trocar. After tinkering in the garage, sketching out ideas on the back of bar napkins, and talking to a few friends you believe that you have invented the next best thing. What do you do?

### *First – Identify your customers*

Yes, your customers are surgeons. So in addition to your colleagues at your institution, you need to reach out to physicians in other specialties and hospitals. And are these your only customers? Probably not. In fact, this is a common misconception. Who makes the purchasing decisions when it comes to surgical equipment? Who prepares or assists the surgeons who will use your new device? Who typically serves on the new technology committee at the facility, and what factors will they take into account when they decide if your device is suitable for use their institution? These are all customers.

### *Second – Interview your customers*

Most people worry about sharing their idea with others because it could be stolen or "borrowed." But this kind of VOC research does not have to include specifics. In fact, you should avoid getting into specifics surrounding your idea to the extent possible when you conduct your initial discovery research. Ask questions related to the problem and let the customer help you to determine if the problem is universal. This type of research will reveal what others consider to be the problem and what pain points you will have to overcome to market your device.

*Third – Don't take it personal*

While perhaps not always easy, I encourage inventors to actively solicit critical feedback from their prospective customers. Embrace and document that feedback. Use this information as a first 'kill' test to determine if your idea has merit and if it truly solves an unmet clinical need.

So, yes, necessity may indeed be the mother of all invention. But also know that all invention is not necessarily the child of necessity.

*This is the first of an ongoing series of articles that Dr. Black will write on the factors that inventors should take into account when they have a concept that they would like to develop for a marketplace application. Dr. Black is a MAG member. Contact him at 850.218.5259 or [www.devices.net](http://www.devices.net).*

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## MAG Alliance receives national award

The Medical Association of Georgia Alliance (MAG Alliance) – which is a network of physicians' spouses who volunteer to improve the health of all Georgians – was honored with an American Medical Association Alliance *LEAP Award* for its grassroots efforts to pass the Georgia Lactation Consultant Practice Act (H.B. 649) in 2016.

“Many mothers receive breastfeeding help while they are in the hospital, but for most the challenges occur after they are discharged – when expert care is no longer available,” MAG Alliance President Merrilee Gober explained when she accepted the award during a ceremony that took place in Chicago on June 12. “The MAG Alliance was, therefore, grateful for the opportunity to be an advocate for Georgia's mothers and babies to ensure greater access to this important and much-needed health care service.”

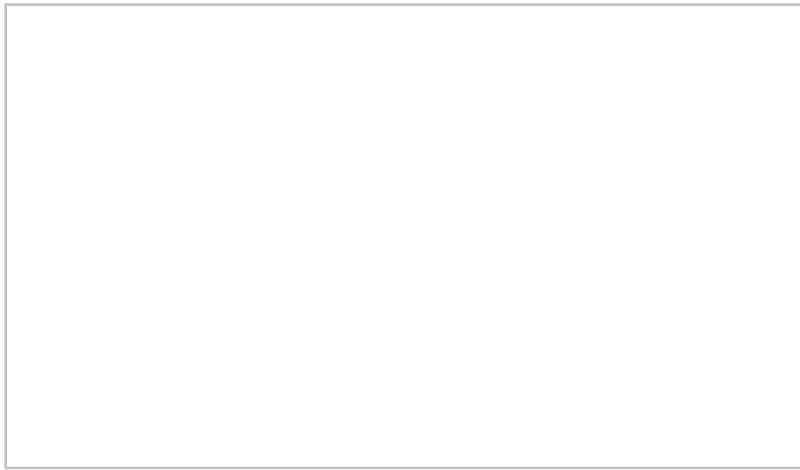
According to Gober, H.B. 649 will establish a lactation consultant advisory committee that will advise the Georgia Secretary of State, who will license the eligible individuals who want to be lactation consultants.

Keeping in mind that Georgia has less than 30 percent of the lactation consultants it needs, Gober also pointed out that, “Physicians, particularly pediatricians and family medicine physicians, would like to hire lactation consultants to be part of their office staff, but they can't unless the insurance companies will reimburse them for the service – which requires that lactation consultants be licensed.” Georgia's licensure will now draw people into the profession to fill the needs.”

Gober stressed that, “The Georgia legislation would have never passed without the strong support of the Medical Association of Georgia, the Georgia Composite Medical Board, and other medical specialty societies in the state.”

In another development, Gober announced that MAG Alliance member Dave Street has been elected to serve as a member of the AMA Alliance Development Committee.

The MAG Alliance supports a number of important initiatives – including the MAG Foundation's [‘Think About It’ campaign](#) to reduce prescription drug abuse and the Georgia Department of Public Health's [‘SHAPE’ program](#) to promote youth fitness. Every Georgia physician's spouse can currently join the MAG Alliance for free. Go to [magalliance.org](http://magalliance.org) for additional information on the MAG Alliance.



*From the left are MAG Alliance Immediate Past President Miriam Eve Tidwell, AMA Alliance President Julie Newman, MAG Alliance President Merrilee Gober, and MAG Alliance Past President Dave Street.*

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### Poll

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## GDC: Study says insured spending 5% more for Rx drugs

The Georgia Drug Card says that a new report from Express Scripts Holding Co., which is the largest pharmacy benefit management firm in the U.S., found that “spending on prescription drugs for insured Americans went up about 5.2 percent [in the] last year, pushed by both higher prices and greater medication use.”

The Georgia Drug Card says that the report – which was highlighted in an article that appeared in *Tech Times* – is based on data from 85 million insured patients that was provided by employers, state and local governments, unions, and Affordable Care Act health insurance exchanges.

Express Scripts said that “the rise is 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 Georgia Drug Card is reminding MAG members that 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, which is free, to obtain savings of up to 75 percent off the retail price for brand and generic FDA-approved medications.

Georgians can also print the Georgia Drug Card for free at [www.georgiadrugcard.com](http://www.georgiadrugcard.com) or they can simply request the Georgia Drug Card discount at any CVS/pharmacy in the state.

[Click for Tech Times article](#)

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## New Members

MAG welcomed the following new members during June...

- Thomas Marion Adair, M.D., Atlanta
- Joon Ahn, M.D., Gainesville
- Sudhir S. Athni, M.D., Macon
- Joel Michael Bress, M.D., Marietta
- Joseph Theodore Brown III, M.D., Marietta
- David Andrew Burns Jr., M.D., Mableton
- Brett H. Cannon, M.D., Atlanta
- Allison Gail Dupont, M.D., Gainesville
- Jonathan Eisenstat, M.D., Decatur
- Eric Brian Fishman, M.D., Marietta
- Howard Fleishon, M.D., Norcross
- Alok Gambhir, M.D., Gainesville
- Quintin Garner Gates, M.D., Woodstock
- Brad Henry Goodman, M.D., Savannah
- Matthew Leo Grabowski, M.D., Marietta
- Kevin Haim, M.D., Canton
- Philip Norton Henderson, M.D., Suwanee
- Margaret Courtney Holtz, M.D., Marietta
- Brenda Jane Hott, M.D., Gainesville
- Armando Janeira, M.D., Marietta
- Jay Hillel Joseph, M.D., Gainesville
- Monica R. Kenney, M.D., Savannah
- Cengiz M. Kilic, M.D., Marietta
- Babur Nuri Kilic, M.D., Marietta
- Grace S. Kim, M.D., Marietta
- Jason Chun Sang Lam, M.D., Marietta
- Robert Gerard Lawhead, M.D., Marietta
- Joash Theophilus Lazarus, MBBS, Atlanta
- Charles Hyok-Jae Lee, M.D., Marietta
- Mark Eric Leimbach, M.D., Gainesville
- Mark Aaron Matthews, M.D., Gainesville
- Lalitha Chandrika Medepalli, M.D., Gainesville
- Seilanian Toosi Mehrdad, M.D., Southfield
- Gary Michael Minkiewicz, M.D., Gainesville
- Kenneth Gerard Murphy, M.D., Marietta
- Robert Blackerby Neuman, M.D., Atlanta
- Matthew David Njaa, M.D., Marietta
- Kashyap Babubhai Patel, M.D., Gainesville
- Salem Nabil Sayar, M.D., Gainesville
- Timothy Anthony Scully, M.D., Gainesville
- Veerappan Subramaniam, M.D., Cumming
- Denis Trto, M.D., Marietta
- Paul Keith Turry, M.D., Marietta
- John Vickery IV, M.D., Fayetteville
- Shaoshan Steven Wang, M.D., Gainesville
- Heather LeAnn Westmoreland, M.D., Gainesville
- Jordan Matthew Wetstone, M.D., Marietta

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Glenn Todd Wheaton, M.D., Marietta  
Mark William Wolozin, M.D., Gainesville  
Ashkan Yazdanpanah, M.D., Marietta  
Andrew Da-Wei Yen, M.D., Gainesville  
Joel Zivot, M.D., Decatur

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## News Briefs

### AMA, others call for change in EHR interoperability measures

The American Medical Association (AMA) and 36 specialty medical associations recently sent a letter to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Office of Health Information Technology (ONC) to urge them to “rethink the way [they] measure the interoperability of electronic health records.”

The letter says that “[the groups believe that] the current direction will require physicians to spend too much time meeting measures that will do little to make electronic health records valuable to patients and medical practices.”

AMA says, “The comment letter is in response to a request for information on assessing interoperability under the Medicare Access and Chip Reauthorization Act (MACRA), the bipartisan payment reform bill that became law last year.”

According to AMA President Steven J. Stack, M.D., “The lack of interoperability is one of the major reasons why the promise of electronic health records has not been fulfilled. Vendors have been incentivized to meet the flawed benchmarks under the Meaningful Use program. We need to replace those benchmarks with ones that focus on better coordinated care. MACRA offers that opportunity, and we need to take advantage of it.”

The letter explains that “the vast majority of vendors offer products that simply exchange static documents, thus satisfying the minimum Meaningful Use requirements. Many in health care view this level of exchange as little more than digital faxing.”

Finally, it says that rather than using data exchange as the metric for measuring interoperability CMS should “focus on usefulness, timeliness, correctness and completeness of data, as well as the ease and cost of information access. That would benefit patients more than counting how many times voluminous documents are sent back and forth.”

[Click for letter](#)

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## News Briefs

### AMA unveils 'MACRA Action Kit'

The American Medical Association (AMA) has created a 'Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization (MACRA) Action Kit' as a resource for physicians and medical practice staff.

AMA says that, "[MACRA] permanently eliminates SGR (and its annual threat of physician payment cuts) and provides positive annual payment updates lasting through 2019."

And AMA notes that, "Consistent with the law, the proposed rule creates two different payment pathways for physicians — alternative payment models (APMs) and the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS)."

[Click for AMA 'MACRA Action Kit'](#)

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## News Briefs

### Foundation releases senior health report

The United Health Foundation has released its 'America's Health Rankings Senior Report' for 2016. The group says the study "offers a comprehensive analysis of senior population health on a national and state-by-state basis across 35 measures of senior health."

Georgia is the 39th ranked state in the report – one spot better than 2015. The state's strengths included a "low prevalence of excessive drinking; high hospice care use; and a high percentage of health screenings." Georgia's "challenges" include "low flu vaccination coverage; a high hip fracture rate; and a low percentage of quality nursing home beds."

The report also notes that, "In the past three years, smoking [in Georgia] decreased 25% from 10.8% to 8.1% of adults aged 65+" and "in the past three years, [Georgia's] very good or excellent health status increased 16% from 32.9% to 38.1% of adults aged 65+."

[Click for report](#)

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## News Briefs

### CMS promoting specialty-specific ICD-10 resources

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is reminding health care providers that it offers a series of guides that compile “key information about ICD-10 codes for each specialty.”

CMS says the guides include, “Common ICD-10 codes and corresponding ICD-9 codes, clinical documentation tips, clinical scenarios, and links to interactive cases studies, in-depth webinars, and other features.”

[Click for CMS ICD-10 'Provider Resources' website](#)

[Click for CMS ICD-10 specialty resources](#)

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## News Briefs

### OIG: Fraud recoveries up “five-fold” in three years

In its most recent ‘Semiannual Report to Congress’ – which covers October 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016 – the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services’ Office of Inspector General (OIG) reports that “CMP (civil monetary penalties) recoveries [for fraud] have increased almost five fold over the past three years, and [it] is on track to exceed prior recoveries in FY 2016.”

OIG reported “recoveries of more than \$2.77 billion consisting of nearly \$554.7 million in audit receivables and about \$2.22 billion in investigative receivables, which include about \$336.6 million in non-HHS investigative receivables...”

OIG also logged “428 criminal actions against individuals or entities that engaged in crimes against HHS programs and 383 civil actions, which include false claims and unjust-enrichment lawsuits filed in federal district court, CMP settlements, and administrative recoveries related to provider self-disclosure matters.”

[Click for OIG report](#)

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## News Briefs

### CMS promoting Medicare revalidation resources

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is stressing that it has established a requirement for “all enrolled providers/suppliers to revalidate their Medicare enrollment information under new enrollment screening criteria.”

CMS says that it has “completed its initial round of revalidations and will be resuming regular revalidation cycles in accordance with 42 CFR §424.515.”

CMS is consequently encouraging applicable physicians and practice staff to review three key web-based resources, including the...

[CMS 'Revalidations' web page](#)

[CMS 'Details for title: 2016-03-01' web page](#)

[CMS 'Enrollment Revalidation – Cycle 2' summary](#)

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## News Briefs

### Georgia DCH Medicaid news & notes

The Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) has announced that it will host a free Medicaid EHR Incentive Program “boot camp” at the Collins Hills Branch Library at 455 Camp Perrin Road in Lawrenceville from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Wednesday, July 13.

According to DCH, “Eligible providers with a Medicaid patient volume of at least 30 percent can receive up to \$63,750 during their six years of program participation.”

DCH says the event will feature “free one-on-one assistance” with...

- Selecting a certified EHR system
- Patient Volume Calculator
- Meaningful Use Stages 1 & 2
- Audit prevention and preparation
- Connecting to a Health Information Exchange (HIE)

Go to [dch.georgia.gov/ehr](http://dch.georgia.gov/ehr) for details on the Georgia Medicaid EHR Incentive Program.

[Click to register](#)

In other news, DCH says that it will become responsible for the administration of the Community Care Services Program (CCSP) effective July 1.

DCH says that, “CCSP is a Medicaid waiver program that provides a range of community-based services to assist individuals who are older and/or have disabilities to achieve safe, self-reliant lives.”

The Georgia Department of Human Services had been responsible for the CCSP.

[Click for CCSP Provider FAQ](#)

[Click for CCSP Member FAQ](#)

Click [here](#) to review the June, 2016 ‘DCH-i’ report for additional information.

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