
MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA 2007 ANNUAL REPORT

Giving strength, support, and voice to District of Columbia physicians

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MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

In 2007, the Medical Society of the District of Columbia faced head on, challenges from forces that sought to divide physicians and weaken the doctor-patient relationship. Those forces and the challenges they brought will likely persist, but so will the Medical Society's focus and will to prevail on behalf of District of Columbia physicians and your patients. Your Board of Directors continued its coalition building, grassroots work by physicians and patients and strong communication outreach to all stakeholders in continuing our ongoing advocacy efforts.

Medical Liability Reform

In March of 2007, the Medical Malpractice Amendment Act of 2006 was finally enacted into law – having been passed by the Council on December 19, 2006. It was a journey that had begun some 15 years earlier and finally bore fruit when the Council and the Mayor came together to champion comprehensive, albeit incremental medical liability reform. Its enactment had been a major priority for the Medical Society for the past several years as it will become the foundation for additional medical liability reforms in the years to come. While the legislation contained some very troubling language on adverse event reporting, MSDC was successful, working with the the D.C. Board of Medicine, to ensure that adverse event reporting was limited to the 28 “never” events as articulated by the National Quality Forum. In 2008, the Society will continue to work with Board of Medicine to monitor the adverse events reporting requirements. In addition, MSDC will work with the Council and the Department of Insurance and Banking to analyze the impact of the legislation in reducing the cost of medical liability insurance.

Medicare Advocacy

Congress heard the arguments made by the Medical Society, the AMA, and all of organized medicine and took last minute action late last year to address

the problems with Medicare payment. In the waning hours of the 2007 legislative session, the U.S. Congress passed a law that postponed for six months the 10 percent cut in the Medicare conversion factor that was slated to occur on Jan. 1, 2008. This law provides for a 0.5 percent increase in the conversion factor from January through June 2008. In addition to assisting the AMA in working for fundamental payment reform in Congress, the Society continues to advocate for individual MSDC members both with CMS and Trailblazer Health, Inc. And finally, MSDC educated members on the requirements related to the National Provider Identifier and the details on how to obtain one.

District of Columbia Legislative Advocacy

In 2007, MSDC worked with the District of Columbia Council on a number of legislation initiatives, most notably:

- Legislation to encourage the administration of the human papillomavirus vaccine to all girls entering the 6th grade;
- Legislation to separate EMS from the Fire Department and create a separate agency;
- Legislation to set minimum staff requirements in hospitals;
- Legislation that would require mandatory HIV testing of inmates at the DC jail;
- Legislation that will remove the Medicaid program and related activities from the Department of Health; and
- Legislation discussing emergency contraception and information for sexual assault victims.

Most recently, MSDC opposed provisions in the Safe Rx Act of 2007 which would have required written informed consent for all prescriptions written “off-label”. MSDC worked with the legislation’s sponsor to draft language that would be neither burdensome to physicians nor harmful to patients. The legislation also requires a code of ethics for pharmaceutical detailers, certain educational background for all detailers, the establishment of a counter or academic detailing program, and restrictions on data mining.

Advocacy in the Courts

During the past year, the Medical Society saw one long-standing lawsuit come to a successful conclusion while another one has just begun. Early in 2006, MSDC was named as a defendant in a lawsuit challenging the Society’s role in peer review. As the litigation evolved, the case became of

paramount importance as the plaintiff sought to throw out the peer review protections afforded to physicians and the Medical Society by the District's strong peer review statute. After more than a year and half, the Society prevailed on summary judgment and the District's law remains intact!

Earlier this year, Consumers' Checkbook made a Freedom of Information request of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services requesting disclosure of Medicare claims records. While CMS and HHS opposed the request, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia found for Consumers' Checkbook and ordered HHS to comply. After prodding from MSDC and the AMA, HHS appealed this ruling. MSDC and AMA will be filing Amicus Briefs in early 2008.

Physician Advocacy with Health Plans

MSDC remained an active advocate for physicians with area health plans - on both individual and member-wide bases.

MSDC continues to meet with CareFirst Senior staff and the DC Insurance Commissioner to try and obtain improvements in credentialing and claims processing by the area's largest health insurance plan. The Insurance Commissioner shares some of the physician community concerns that these issues have lingered too long. The Medical Society continues to encourage members to contact us with 3rd party payer problems. Issues addressed on behalf of individual practices included delays in payments and credentialing, erroneous inclusions and exclusions from health plan networks, retroactive denials and others.

As a member benefit designed to help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of MSDC members' medical practices, the Society continued its support of the Practice Management Section. Membership in this section is free and open to any administrative staff of MSDC members. The Section's informative monthly breakfast seminars featured presentations on how to improve customer service, understand financial and audit reports, and best practices for the business functions of a medical practice.

Medicaid

In summer 2007, CMS issued regulations requiring the use of tamper-resistant prescription pads for all handwritten Medicaid prescriptions as of October 1, 2007. MSDC immediately realized, as did the entirety of

organized medicine, the disruption that would be caused to Medicaid recipients due to the short-time frame for implementation and the lack of guidance from the D.C. Medicaid program. The Society initiated contact with the D.C. Medicaid program to work to resolve the myriad of problems that would be caused by an October 1st implementation date. Fortunately, organized medicine was able to get a six month delay at the last minute. The Society will continue its work on this matter as the April 1, 2008, deadline approaches.

Your Medical Society also acted when it became clear that there was a potential problem related to access to Medicaid for new applicants. MSDC joined with other health care groups urging the District Medicaid program to apply a common-sense approach to enforcing a new federal law that requires all persons applying or re-applying for Medicaid to present proof of US citizenship. The District's Medical Assistance Administration agreed and has stated that persons who can show that they are making a good-faith effort to produce a birth certificate or other paperwork proving citizenship will not be denied coverage because they lack such documentation.

New Member Benefits

Medical Society Services (MSS) and MSDC have partnered with the Healthcare Consulting Division of Snyder, Cohn, Collyer, Hamilton and Associates to act as an advisory resource to MSDC members and their staffs with practice management questions, carrier issues, billing and collection problems and HR issues. These project consultations are included in your Medical Society membership, in addition to a discount program which is available to new clients for the more involved engagements.

MSDC launched an interactive online career center designed to be the primary resource for the DC medical community to make on line employment connections. With the MSDC career center, employers can access quality candidates, upload job postings quickly and easily, access online reports with job activity statistics, and benefit from competitive pricing. For more information and to access the Career Center, go to www.msdc.org and click on MSDC Online Career Center on the homepage.

As a result of a partnership between Medical Society Services, Inc., (MSS), the for-profit arm of the Medical Society, and Verizon/Echoworx, MSDC members now have access to an email encryption product that safeguards physician-to-patient and physician-to-physician communications. MSDC members will receive a discount as part of the agreement. For more

information on MSS Secure Mail, go to www.msdc.org and click on Secure Email.

The George Washington Medical Faculty Associates and MSDC have partnered to offer MSDC members a complete automated external defibrillator (AED) program at a discounted rate. This program offers a one-stop-shop for all components of an AED program, including prescription and purchase of an AED, medical direction and oversight, registration, training and access to the MFA's online tracking system. For more information, contact Kyle Majchrzak, MFA's AED program director at kmajchrzak@mfa.gwu.edu.

Emergency Preparedness

In part because of the reduced federal funding for emergency preparedness, MSDC has partnered with the DC Department of Health and merged the Medical Reserve Corps into the Emergency Healthcare Reserve Corps (EHRC) with staff provided by the Department of Health. If you would like to volunteer for the EHRC, please contact Sharon Pellum at the Department of Health at 202-671-0806 or Sharon.pellum@dc.gov.

District of Columbia Political Action Committee (DOCPAC)

In 2007, DOCPAC elected a new Chairman, Marc Rankin, M.D., and continues its mission to support local governmental officials who believe in a robust medical community in the District of Columbia. There were two special elections in Wards 4 and 7, and DOCPAC was involved in both races. In 2008 there will be six seats of the Council up for election, and DOCPAC will evaluate and support those candidates who support a strong physician/patient relationship.

Speaking Out

Under the leadership of its chair, the Medical Society's Family Violence Task Force continues to work hard to reduce the prevalence of family violence. The Task Force encourages MSDC members with expertise and or interest in the area of family violence to join in task force activities. Family Violence is an epidemic and of critical health significance to every physician, regardless of specialty or practice location. At the national level, MSDC Task Force representatives remained active on the American Medical Association's National Advisory Council on Violence and Abuse. If you are interested in participating in Family Violence Task Force activities, please contact MSDC at info@msdc.org

Physician Health Program Receives Major Support

Georgetown University Hospital made another extremely generous financial contribution to the Society's Physician Health program. This support as well as contributions from ProAssurance/NCRIC, The George Washington University Hospital, Providence Hospital, Sibley Memorial Hospital, Washington Hospital Center Administration, Washington Hospital Center Medical Staff, Howard University Hospital Medical Staff, and others throughout the year allowed the Medical Society to continue to advocate for physicians and medical students in this life-saving program.

The Voice of DC Physicians

Medical Society representatives continued to represent DC physicians in debates about national policy through active involvement in the AMA House of Delegates.

The voice of DC physicians was also heard in advisory groups that affect physicians, medical practices, and health care in the District of Columbia. Among the groups on which the Medical Society was represented are the following:

- Trailblazer Health Enterprises Carrier Advisory Committee
- Medicaid Medical Care Advisory Committee
- Metropolitan Council of Governments Bioterrorism Task Force
- US Pharmacopoeia
- AMA Litigation Center Executive Committee
- DC Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking Advisory Committee
- DC Chamber of Commerce Health Policy and Legislation committees
- DC Citizens Corps Council
- National Capital Regional Emergency Response Forum
- National Capital Region Medical Reserve Corps

Governance/Leadership

In 2007, the Society's strategic plan was re-examined and refined – bringing additional focus and emphasis to the Society's advocacy role as well as serving as the voice of all District physicians. The Board of Directors, in furtherance of its fiduciary role, right-sized the Society's headquarters operations and authorized a new headquarters location at 1115 30th Street, NW.

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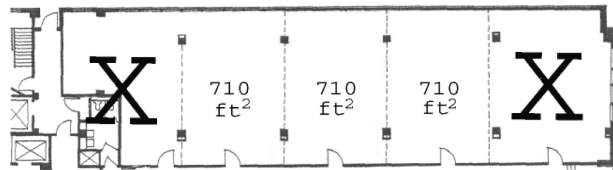
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MSDC’s Leadership Development Committee worked hard this year to ensure that the Society attracts the best and the brightest physicians into leadership of organized medicine. These bright new voices for the profession have demonstrated the energy, fearlessness, sense of urgency, focus and political savvy needed to take the Medical Society of DC where you want and need it to go. They can’t do it alone. Only by working with their Board colleagues and physicians like you, can these new leaders shape the Medical Society of the District of Columbia into the more vital and responsive organization you want it to be.

Come join these promising leaders as they give voice to the new MSDC.

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