Are the Planets Aligning for SGR Repeal This Year?

The MSMS leaders and Alliance members who attended the annual AMA Advocacy Conference in Washington, DC, last week had the chance to meet with members of the Michigan Congressional Delegation to discuss federal health policy issues, including the Medicare SGR formula.

Congressman Fred Upton (R-St. Joseph), who chairs the House Energy & Commerce Committee, told the group that he’s drafting a bill to repeal and replace the SGR, and he expects movement on it by August or September. MSMS President John G. Bizon, MD, a Calhoun County otolaryngologist, attended the E&C Committee hearing about it on February 14.

“There is an energy in Washington now that hasn’t been there in the past regarding the repeal of the SGR formula,” explained Doctor Bizon. “The Congressional Budget Office indicated that the cost of an SGR fix is far lower than was thought in the past, so perhaps Congress believes this is the time to consider it. I am very much encouraged by Congressman Upton’s bipartisan approach to the SGR repeal, and for the first time, I have left Washington with sense that, yes, it’s now time to get this done.”

More>>

Blues Bills Pass House Committee; Prior Auth

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Upcoming Events

PCMH: Coordinated Care, Optimal Outcomes
March 13
Somerset Inn - Troy

Two tracks: (1) for practices exploring or just beginning PCMH; and (2) for practices needing more advanced information. Register Now >>

Spring Scientific Meeting
May 16 & 17
Somerset Inn - Troy

Smaller and shorter version of the popular fall Scientific Meeting, featuring clinical education. Register Now >>

More Events >>
Hearing Next Week

Yesterday, the House Insurance Committee voted 11-0 to pass SB 61 and 62, which aim to transform Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan into a nonprofit mutual company. Despite recent discussions about adding language regarding coverage for elective abortions, the Committee left it out. (Similar language caused Gov. Rick Snyder to veto a previous Blue Cross bill package during lame duck.) The bills now move to the House floor. MSMS continues to work with the House to advocate for physician input and patient advocacy.

This week’s MSMS Legislative Blog also highlights nursing scope expansion legislation, Medicaid expansion, and budget activity. Leg Blog>>

Prior Auth on Deck for Next Week
MSMS Immediate Past President Steven E. Newman, MD, an Oakland County neurologist, will testify on behalf of MSMS Tuesday before the House Health Policy Committee in support of House Bills 4274 and 4275, which aim to create a universal prior authorization form for prescription drugs. The bills were introduced by Rep. Gail Haines (R-Waterford Twp.), who also chairs the Committee. Senator Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton) introduced the Senate versions: SB 178 and 179.

Urge lawmaker support>>

Legislators in the House
Physicians, medical students, Alliance members, and medical group managers welcomed new and veteran legislators to the New Lawmaker Reception at MSMS on Wednesday. MSMS thanks these legislators for attending: Rep. Jim Ananich (D-Flint); Sen. Goeff Hansen (R-Hart); Sen. Hoon-Yung Hopgood (D-Taylor); Sen. Roger Kahn, MD (R-Saginaw); Rep. David Knezek (D-Dearborn Heights); Rep. Bill LaVoy (D-Monroe); Rep. Sean McCann (D-Kalamazoo); and Rep. Sam Singh (D-East Lansing).
**Guv Makes Mental Health a Priority with New Commission**

This week, **Gov. Rick Snyder** issued an executive order creating the Mental Health & Wellness Commission to advise the Michigan Department of Community Health on how to improve the state’s mental health system.

Chairing the Commission will be **Lt. Gov. Brian Calley**, MDCH Director **Jim Haveman** will serve as vice chair, and the other members will come from the legislature.

“Given the priority of mental health in Michigan right now, Governor Snyder’s call for a new commission to look at and advise the Department of Community Health on mental health issues is vitally important as we look at the current system and changes going forward,” said Director Haveman.

MSMS has long supported parity in coverage for mental health services, as well as an increase in access to mental health services.

More>>

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**Get Your Policy On! House of Delegates Resolutions Due March 1**

Resolve to make 2013 the year you engage in MSMS to the fullest. Submitting a resolution to the MSMS House of Delegates is a great way to immerse yourself in what makes MSMS tick: facilitating policy to improve health care and support organized medicine in Michigan. The MSMS House of Delegates meeting will take place Friday-Sunday, April 26-28, at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids.

If you have never participated in this process before, fear not. Help is available on the bookmark-worthy MSMS website. There, you will find several resources for writing and submitting resolutions, as well as information about leadership elections and hotel reservations. After the resolution submission deadline on March 1, the HOD Handbook will be compiled and made available online.

**Run, Doctor, Run!**
MSMS announces open officer and Board of Directors seats for the 2013 House of Delegates meeting. MSMS Speaker **Rose M. Ramirez, MD**, a Kent County family physician, and Vice Speaker **Pino D. Colone, MD**, a Genesee County emergency physician, recently polled all incumbent MSMS officeholders whose positions are up for a vote at the 2013 House of Delegates meeting. The poll was conducted according to House of Delegates’ requirements to determine which officeholders are seeking nomination for re-election.

**Elections & Candidates >>**

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**Deadline Extended to March 15 for Mridha Award Nominations**
To celebrate and inspire volunteerism, a prestigious annual award has been established through the MSMS Foundation. The "Mridha International Physician Volunteer Award," established by Debasish Mridha, MD, a Saginaw County neurologist, and his family, will recognize and support one outstanding physician member of MSMS each year who provides volunteer medical care and/or counsel outside of the US. The deadline for nominations has been extended to March 15.

Nomination form>>

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