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Latest News

ACR Meets with Jonathan Blum, CMS Director of Medicare Management

On May 23, the ACR and the American Academy of Neurology met with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to discuss the impact that payment inequities have on our respective workforces. Jonathan Blum expressed interest in rheumatology and neurology workforce data that supports our concerns regarding the ability to provide timely, high-quality patient care, and the future of our specialties.

Both organizations assert that there is a strong correlation between residency and/or fellowship match and compensation which negatively impacts our specialties' workforces. The ACR and AAN will continue this important dialogue with Mr. Blum and CMS to establish policies to ensure an adequate workforce in cognitive-based specialties.

Make a Difference on Capitol Hill

The ACR must ensure that Congress values rheumatology and understands the impact arthritis and rheumatic diseases have on one's quality of life. Who better to educate lawmakers about the unique issues facing the rheumatology community than you?

[Apply today](#) to attend the 2011 *Advocates for Arthritis* conference September 19 – 20 in Washington, D.C. *Advocates for Arthritis* brings rheumatology professionals and patients together to educate Congress on rheumatology-related issues. The ACR provides accepted advocates with advocacy training, a schedule of Capitol Hill visits and travel reimbursement.

Practice Management News

Participation in the RCR Helps your Practice

The Rheumatology Clinical Registry was developed to provide maximum benefit in today's health care environment.

Use the RCR to:

- Validate high-quality care and identify areas to improve your rheumatology practice by accessing provider, practice and national reports. Reports include quality measures developed and endorsed by the ACR.

- Participate in the CMS PQRS program, which provides successful reporters with a bonus payment of two percent of total Medicare Part B Physician Fee Schedule charges for services furnished during the reporting period.
- Contribute to the development of a comprehensive national data source on rheumatic diseases that will ultimately benefit both rheumatology patients and practices.

ACR members and their practice teams can use the RCR for quality improvement and population management for free! RCR users participating in the CMS PQRS and/or electronic prescribing incentive program can submit data to CMS for a reduced rate.

Benefits of using the RCR for CMS PQRS reporting include:

- **The success rate for registry reporting is higher than claims-based reporting.** This is primarily due to submission errors and missing/inconsistent data that are common in claims reporting. Validation checks built into the RCR reporting process help ensure that all submissions to PQRS are accurate and complete before the data are sent to CMS.
- **The ability to enter and view data at any point throughout the reporting year means that your practice can perform data entry retrospectively, in a batch format.** The RCR will allow you to submit your 2011 data right up until the CMS deadline. This process eliminates the effort required to track claims throughout the year. Also, you can review and update your data at any time prior to the CMS deadline, helping you assess whether you are meeting reporting requirements.
- **Registry reporting maximizes the value of your data for clinical quality improvement projects within your organization.** Analyzed data reports will assist you in identifying gaps in care.

Learn more about 2011 PQRS requirements at www.rheumatology.org/rcr.

Learn more about what the RCR can do for your practice!

For more information or to register, visit www.rheumatology.org/rcr, or e-mail rcr@rheumatology.org.

Don't miss this opportunity to participate in a national quality improvement effort for rheumatology that has an impact at the local, regional, and national levels!

Proposed Provisions to 1500 Health Insurance Form

The National Uniform Claim Committee is requesting public comment on the proposed provisions to the 1500 health insurance form. The proposed provisions will accommodate data reporting for Version 5010 professional electronic claim transaction.

The 45-day comment period ends July 21, 2011. To participate, visit <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/75WVJFJ>.

ADVOCACY NEWS

ACR Reviews Regence and Wellpoint Policies

The ACR received requests to review the following policies:

- *Regence*: Immune Globulin Replacement Therapy
- *Wellpoint*: Percutaneous Neuromodulation Therapy

The ACR insurance subcommittee reviewed both policies and sent comments to both insurance companies.

ACR Coding and Auditing Solutions

The ACR has certified coders on staff and offers free comprehensive coding and auditing presentations. Best of all, we come to you!

Contact the ACR practice management department at practice@rheumatology.org or (404) 633-3777, ext 820 to schedule a presentation in your area today.

ACR Submits Testimony to House Ways & Means Committee on Physician Payment Reform

On May 26, the ACR submitted [written testimony](#) to the House Ways & Means subcommittee on health regarding physician payment reform. The testimony focuses on a permanent repeal of the sustainable growth rate, and highlights the current imbalance in the physician fee schedule and the need to value cognitive specialty care. It was submitted as part of the Ways & Means health subcommittee hearing on physician payment reform held on May 12.

The House of Representatives is actively pursuing input on physician payment reform. The ACR frequently meets with congressional committee members and staff to discuss our priorities and concerns regarding reform.

Legislation to Ensure Access to DXAs Introduced

On May 26, Senators Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) and Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) and Representatives Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.) and Michael Burgess, MD (R-Texas) introduced the *Preservation of Access to Osteoporosis Testing for Medicare Beneficiaries Act of 2011* (H.R. 2020/S. 1096). This legislation extends payment for DXA scans at the current reimbursement rate of 70 percent of the 2006 reimbursement level through 2013. The current payment increase is set to expire at the end of 2011.

Take Action: Contact Your Members of Congress

Contact your members of Congress today and urge them to co-sponsor this important legislation!

Call your legislators using the AMA Grassroots Hotline: (800) 833-6354 or send an e-mail through the [ACR Legislative Action Center](#).

Balanced Billing Legislation Introduced in the Senate

On May 23, Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), introduced the Senate version of the *Medicare Patient Empowerment Act*. This legislation would allow physicians to enter into a contract with their Medicare patients without penalty. Rep. Tom Price, MD, introduced the companion legislation (HR 1700) in the House on May 3. The ACR signed onto a [coalition letter](#) to Speaker Boehner urging him to support the legislation.

ADVOCACY NEWS continued

ACR Board of Directors Visits Capitol Hill in May

The ACR board of directors met with over 70 congressional offices on Thursday, May 19 educating members of Congress and their staff on issues affecting the rheumatology profession and patient access to specialty care.

The board urged Congress to:

- Join the Congressional Arthritis Caucus
- Reform the Physician Payment System
- Ensure access to osteoporosis testing
- Maintain funding for arthritis research

Get Ready for Summer Recess

Congress will be home August 8 –September 5 so now is the perfect time to request an in-person meeting during summer recess. Call the district office nearest you to schedule a meeting to discuss the importance of access to osteoporosis testing, maintaining research funding and other issues affecting you and your patients. Remember that members of Congress are elected to represent you and it is *your* voice that influences them the most.

Visit www.rheumatology.org/advocacy for more tips and tools on communicating with Congress.

Invest in Rheumatology

Investing in RheumPAC is an investment in your practice, patients and most importantly, your subspecialty.

Congress continues to make health policy decisions that affect how rheumatologists are reimbursed and treat their patients. RheumPAC provides opportunities to educate lawmakers on the complex issues patients with arthritis and rheumatic conditions face, and the important role a rheumatologist plays in healthcare savings through proper diagnosis and improved patient outcomes.

Make an investment in your future by giving to RheumPAC today. [Contribute online](#) and be sure to review the [2011 RheumPAC membership benefits](#) before making your contribution.

