

May 2017

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is pleased to present this issue of *STS Advocacy Monthly*, an e-newsletter with the latest and most important legislative and regulatory news relevant to cardiothoracic surgery. If you have comments or suggestions, please e-mail advocacy@sts.org.

Avoid Payment Cut—Submit Data to CMS through STS National Database

The STS National Database has been designated as a Qualified Clinical Data Registry for the Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS), and cardiothoracic surgeons participating in the Adult Cardiac Surgery Database are eligible to reap the benefits. Surgeons who consent to have STS [submit Quality measure data](#) to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on their behalf will avoid a 4% Medicare payment reduction in 2019. This service is FREE for STS members. **A consent form will be available early this summer.** If you have questions, contact Derek Steck, STS National Database Coordinator, at dsteck@sts.org.

STS Releases MACRA Toolkit

The Society has developed a [MACRA Toolkit for Cardiothoracic Surgeons](#), which offers important information about the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) and the Medicare Quality Payment Program. The toolkit includes detailed overviews of MIPS and Advanced Alternative Payment Models, a list of steps cardiothoracic surgeons should take, a glossary of frequently encountered terminology, and links to additional resources. If you have additional questions about MACRA, contact advocacy@sts.org.

CABG Bundle Delayed to 2018

Earlier this week, CMS announced that it will [delay implementation](#) of a mandatory coronary artery bypass grafting bundled payment model until January 1, 2018. STS had previously [submitted comments](#) in support of the delay. The Society will provide more information as soon as it is available.

Society Updates Health Reform Priorities

STS has released [an updated set of Health Reform Priorities](#) to align with changes from the Affordable Care Act. As Congress debates various health care reform options, it is critical for STS members to advocate for the needs of patients and the specialty. The Health Reform Priorities reflect the work of the STS Workforce on Health Policy, Reform, and Advocacy. The priorities include:

- 1) Ensuring Access to Health Insurance / Access to Health Care
- 2) Supporting Evidence-Based Health Care / Access to Data
- 3) Promoting Value (Quality / Cost) in Health Care
- 4) Promoting Training and the Adoption of Technology
- 5) Prioritizing Team-Based Care / Care Coordination

STS Signs Letters on Smoking Ban, UDIs in Claims Forms

The Society recently signed multiorganizational letters that:

- Expressed strong support of H.R. 1662, which would [make Veterans Health Administration facilities smoke-free](#). Lung cancer is more prevalent among veterans than the general population, and this bill would help discourage veterans from smoking, as well as protect patients from the dangers of secondhand smoke.
- Urged CMS and the Food and Drug Administration to [disseminate regulations encouraging the collection and usage of Unique Device Identifiers](#) (UDIs) in medical claims forms. UDIs are numbers and bar codes that identify both implantable and external medical devices. Including them in claims forms would allow better monitoring and correction of adverse events. However, the panel that oversees claims forms recently recommended that the forms be updated only to capture Device Identifiers, which are slightly less detailed than UDIs.

Society Endorses Legislation on Medical Liability and Education Reform

STS recently submitted letters of support for two bills that would benefit cardiothoracic surgeons and their patients.

The first is Congressman Richard Hudson's (R-NC) medical liability reform legislation. The [Accessible Care by Curbing Excessive Lawsuits \(ACCESS\) Act](#), H.R. 1704, would ensure that physicians and health care providers can provide vital medical services to all patients without the threat of meritless lawsuits, so health care services are more affordable.

The second bill, the [Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act](#) (H.R. 2267), was introduced by Representatives Joe Crowley (D-NY) and Ryan Costello (R-PA). The Society has endorsed this legislation in previous years, and the current momentum of health care reform may give it a boost. If passed, it would increase the number of resident positions by 3,000 per year for 5 years. Half of these positions would be allocated to specialties facing a shortage of residents, such as cardiothoracic surgery.

Visit the [STS Legislative Action Center](#) and ask your members of Congress to support these important pieces of legislation today.

STS Advocacy Scholarship Recipients Attend ACS Summit

Four STS members received scholarships from the Society to attend the American College of Surgeons Leadership and Advocacy Summit in Washington, DC, earlier this month. Benjamin Bryner, MD, Loretta Erhunmwunsee, MD, Ashok Venkataraman, MD, and Jonathan Yang, MD learned crucial advocacy strategies and met with their representatives in Congress during the intensive 4-day event.

Interested in meeting with your own members of Congress? [Register today](#) to participate in the next STS Legislative Fly-In, June 12-13.

Photo, from left: Dr. Erhunmwunsee (City of Hope, CA), Dr. Venkataraman (Loyola University Health System, IL), Dr. Bryner (Duke University Health System, NC), and Dr. Yang (Cardiothoracic & Vascular Surgeons, TX)



Key Contact Connect

Check Up with Congress

Join STS for the first of a series of half-hour conference calls with members of Congress. The inaugural Check Up with Congress will be held this coming Tuesday, May 23, at 6:00 p.m. ET. *(Please note the date change.)*

Fellow cardiothoracic surgeon Rep. Larry Bucshon, MD will describe his work in Congress and share why it's important to [support STS-PAC](#). Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and have their opinions heard. [Sign up for the call today](#), and you will be sent the call-in information via e-mail prior to the event. Don't miss this opportunity to check up on the people making decisions that will affect you and your patients.



Rep. Bucshon (center, wearing a red tie) was awarded the 2015 STS Legislator of the Year Award for his work to preserve global surgical payments.