

August 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](mailto:advocacy@sts.org).

### **CMS Offers to Cancel CABG Episode Payment Model**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced a proposed rule that would cancel the Coronary Artery Bypass Graft Episode Payment Model, which was scheduled to begin on January 1, 2018. [STS had objected](#) to the mandatory nature of the model and its design, which ignores the cost savings that could be achieved by combining clinical information from the STS National Database with claims data. The Society has encouraged CMS to seek more provider input before going forward with these types of initiatives. Public comments regarding the proposed rule are due to CMS by October 16, 2017.

### **STS Comments on Quality Payment Program Updates**

STS has provided CMS with [feedback on Calendar Year 2018 Updates to the Quality Payment Program](#) (QPP). The QPP aims to advance quality care by measuring clinician performance through quality, improvement activities, and advancing care information measures. The Society's comments addressed:

- Facility-based measurement;
- Overall scoring weights for the Quality, Cost, Advancing Care Information, and Improvement Activities categories;
- Increasing the role of qualified clinical data registries (QCDRs), including the STS National Database; and
- Ongoing development of Advanced Alternative Payment Models (APMs).

STS also [joined a letter](#) initiated by the Physician Clinical Registry Coalition that expands on the importance of QCDRs in the QPP. For more information on the QPP, check out the Society's [MACRA Toolkit for Cardiothoracic Surgeons](#).

### **The Society Provides Regulatory Relief Feedback**

Echoing a [letter previously sent to CMS](#), the Society submitted comments to the House Committee on Ways and Means regarding a new initiative to reduce Medicare regulations and improve patient care. STS highlighted the following:

- Surgeons included in hospital tax identification numbers for quality reporting under the QPP will not be able to accurately demonstrate value;
- The rushed process implemented by CMS for collecting global surgical payments data will not provide a comprehensive view of postoperative care and may result in flawed valuation of these procedures;
- QCDRs need—but do not have continuous access to—Medicare claims data; and
- Physician-focused APMs need a pathway for implementation.

### **STS Signs Dental Lifeline Network Statement**

The Society is among approximately 50 medical specialty societies and other organizations urging CMS to approve Medicare coverage for medically necessary oral/dental care. In addition to a joint statement,

several societies also described specific diseases, conditions, and procedures that are negatively affected by untreated oral/dental infections.

### **STS-PAC Celebrates 20th Anniversary**

2017 marks the 20th year that STS-PAC has exclusively represented cardiothoracic surgeons. Many STS members have consistently supported STS-PAC over the past two decades. However, support from every STS member is needed to help mitigate the current challenges facing the cardiothoracic workforce. So far this year, the PAC has raised \$87,605 from 219 STS members, with an average contribution of \$400. [Make your contribution today](#) toward the 2017 fundraising goal of \$200,000. If you would like more information about how your STS-PAC contribution is being used, contact the STS Government Relations office at [advocacy@sts.org](mailto:advocacy@sts.org) or (202) 787-1230.

### **Key Contact Connect**

#### **Sign Up for the Fall Fly-In**

Join your colleagues in Washington, DC, for the Society's next [Legislative Fly-In](#), November 1-2. When surgeons speak, Congress listens. A dinner briefing will be held on Wednesday, November 1, followed by breakfast and Capitol Hill meetings the next day that will be customized for each participant. To secure your spot, e-mail Madeleine Stirling at [mstirling@sts.org](mailto:mstirling@sts.org). Scholarships are available for four STS members and will cover reasonable travel and meal expenses; [fill out the application](#) by Wednesday, September 13, to be considered for a scholarship.

### **STS Members Participate in District Meetings**

Approximately 40 STS members volunteered to meet with their Congressional representatives at home this summer to express their perspectives on a range of topics. Many thanks to those listed below for their commitment to advocacy on behalf of the specialty and their patients! If you would like meet with your members of Congress when they are back in their districts this fall, e-mail [mstirling@sts.org](mailto:mstirling@sts.org) to get started.

Zewditu E. Asfaw (MI)

John H. Calhoun (TX)

Andrea J. Carpenter (TX)

Malini P. Daniel (PA)

Rajeev Dhupar (PA)

J. Michael DiMaio (TX)

Kim F. Duncan (NE)

Aaron W. Eckhauser (UT)

Carlos O. Encarnacion (MD)

Erin A. Gillaspie (TN)

Joshua B. Goldberg (NY)

Frederick L. Grover (CO)

Paula F. Guinnip (OK)

Charles D. Harr (NC)

Dudley A. Hudspeth (AZ)

Scott D. Johnson (SC)

David L. Joyce (WI)

Junaid H. Khan (CA)

Leslie J. Kohman (NY)

Paul L. Linsky (AL)

Kevin W. Lobdell (NC)

Paresh P. Mane (NY)

Howard F. Marks (NC)

Jason McKelvey (OR)

HelenMari L. Merritt (NE)

Keith S. Naunheim (MO)

Roman V. Petrov (PA)

Joseph Rabin (MD)

Rishindra M. Reddy (MI)

Todd K. Rosengart (TX)

Sahar A. Saddoughi (MN)

Amir A. Sarkeshik (CA)

Gilbert R. Schorlemmer (UT)

Dean P. Schraufnagel (OH)

Raymond L. Singer (PA)

Cynthia N. Steimle (IL)

Bryan M. Steinberg (MD)

Mark F. Sullivan (MD)