

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

STS Advocacy Monthly

February 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.

Watch Congressional Briefing on Heart Valve Disease Awareness

As part of the first Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day (February 22, 2017), STS Immediate Past President Joseph E. Bavaria, MD joined the Director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and a patient and his caregiver on Capitol Hill to educate congressional staffers and others about the disease, which affects nearly 5 million Americans. STS, the Alliance for Aging Research, and other organizations successfully lobbied for this new health awareness day. The full Congressional Briefing is available on the [Society's Facebook page](#). [Dr. Bavaria's video segment](#) also is available on the STS YouTube Channel. Visit www.valvediseaseday.org to learn more.

STS Joins Letters on EHRs, Tobacco Oversight, and More

The Society recently joined the American Medical Association and other organizations in asking the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology to postpone a [burdensome electronic health record \(EHR\) requirement](#). Currently, physicians can qualify for certain financial incentive programs by using either 2014 or 2015 editions of EHR software. Starting in 2018, however, all practices must utilize 2015 editions to maintain eligibility in the programs. The letter notes that there are very few 2015 edition EHR products available, so physicians may be forced to switch vendors and utilize systems that may not be suitable for their specialty. The organizations have requested that the deadline for upgrading be pushed to January 2019 or later.

STS also signed [letters to the Senate](#) and [House of Representatives](#) opposing a bill that would exempt some cigars, including flavored cigars, from Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversight. The letter states that proper FDA oversight is important because each day, more than 2,100 kids under age 18 try cigar smoking for the first time.

Additionally, the Society signed multiorganizational letters that:

- Highlighted concerns that the recent [executive order suspending some foreign entry](#) into the United States will have a negative impact on patient care, medical research, the education of health professionals, and international scientific collaboration;
- Asked Congress to [provide the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#) with at least \$334 million in budget authority, which is consistent with current levels;

- Strongly reiterated [unequivocal support for vaccines](#) and stated that they are the safest and most cost-effective way of preventing disease, disability, and death; and
- Requested further [clarification from the Office for Human Research Protections](#) on how the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (known as the “Common Rule”) applies to clinical data registries.

Committee Proposes Inclusion of UDIs in Claims Forms

The Accredited Standards Committee X12, which manages health insurance claims forms, has [proposed several revisions to the forms](#), including the addition of a field for unique device identifiers (UDIs). STS has previously expressed its support of this change, noting that capturing UDI information could enable large-scale analyses of device outcomes and improve patient safety. The committee’s recommendation is an important step in moving this initiative forward. A public comment period regarding the proposed revisions is ongoing, and the Society is working to provide feedback.

Key Contact Connect

Apply for an STS Advocacy Scholarship

STS is offering scholarships for seven STS Candidate Members to attend either the upcoming [American College of Surgeons Leadership and Advocacy Summit](#) (May 6–9, 2017) or an [STS Legislative Fly-In](#) (June 12–13, 2017). The STS scholarships will cover reasonable travel and meal expenses, as well as registration for the ACS Summit if that event is chosen. Send your [completed application](#), along with your CV, to advocacy@sts.org by March 31, 2017. Award decisions will be made by April 7.