

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

STS Advocacy Monthly

July 2016

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.

CMS Proposes CABG Bundle

This past Monday (July 25), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) published a proposal to create a mandatory bundled payment for coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) surgery. Under the proposal, bundling would be assigned by geographic area based on a number of factors, and participants would be eligible for Advanced Alternative Payment Model (APM) credit via the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA). STS [issued a statement](#) on the proposed bundle that acknowledged the shared goals of helping to improve the quality of patient care and urged CMS to work with the Society and leverage the STS National Database as a resource for quality improvement.

The following day, STS Past President Jeffrey B. Rich participated in a roundtable discussion about bundled payments and post-acute care, hosted by Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell. During the discussion, Dr. Rich stressed the importance of collaboration among providers: "Bundled payments that promote financial and clinical accountability, especially in patients with life-threatening heart disease, creates the framework for success in achieving higher quality, well-coordinated, and lower-cost patient care. My personal experiences in this area as a leader in local, regional, and national provider communities and as the former Director of the Center for Medicare Management at CMS has proven that bundled payments, as a payment methodology, is the pathway to a brighter future for all Medicare beneficiaries and healthcare system sustainability."

CMS Releases 2017 Medicare Payment Proposal

Earlier this month, CMS [issued its Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Proposed Rule](#) for 2017. In that proposed rule, CMS altered a section of MACRA that prohibited the agency from unbundling global surgical payments and required CMS to collect a representative sample of postoperative services provided by surgeons.

Instead of collecting a "representative sample," CMS proposes to collect data from *all* physicians who provide 10- and 90-day global services. STS believes that this would impose an undue administrative burden on physicians and plans to address this policy, among others, in an upcoming comment letter. In addition, Reps. Larry Bucshon, MD (R-IN) and Ami Bera, MD (D-CA) are leading a congressional sign-on letter asking CMS to reverse its position on global surgical payments as articulated in the proposed rule. STS members who want their voices heard on this important issue should e-mail advocacy@sts.org for more information.

Two STS Members Appointed to CMS MACRA Committee

Dr. Rich and Director-at-Large Cameron D. Wright, MD have been appointed to a new committee that will advise CMS on the development of episode-based resource use measures under the MACRA. STS

nominated Drs. Rich and Wright and also [signed a joint letter of support](#) for nominees from the American College of Cardiology and other organizations.

Society Comments on Data Sharing Paper

STS has [submitted comments](#) to the Health Care Payment Learning & Action Network on its draft white paper, "Accelerating and Aligning Population-Based Payment Models: Data Sharing." In the letter, the Society agreed that data sharing is essential to the development and implementation of population-based payment and alternative payment models. The Society also agreed that linking robust clinical data with resource utilization data could help improve health care quality and efficiency. As such, STS made the case for restoring STS National Database access to the Social Security Death Master File, which would allow researchers to assess long-term clinical outcomes, as well as costs.

Key Contact Connect

Meet with Your Representatives This Summer

Congress is officially out for summer recess, and it's the perfect opportunity to meet with your representatives at home. Visit their offices, or bring them to you! Site visits are an excellent way to help keep your member of Congress informed and engaged in important health policy issues. E-mail advocacy@sts.org and STS staff will handle all the details, from coordinating with administrators at your facility to providing briefing materials and tips on how to deliver your message.

Save the Date for the Fall Fly-In

Mark your calendar for the next [STS Legislative Fly-In](#), which will be held in Washington, DC, on Monday, October 17. The Fly-In takes place during the American College of Surgeons Clinical Congress and will allow STS members to join their colleagues in advocating for issues specific to cardiothoracic surgery. Fly-In participants also will be able to attend an STS-hosted briefing for congressional staffers, focusing on the STS National Database and Medicare physician payment reform. The scholarships will cover reasonable travel and meal expenses (1 day/1 hotel night). Send your [completed application](#), along with your CV, to advocacy@sts.org by September 2, 2016. Award decisions will be made by September 9.