

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

STS Advocacy Monthly

September 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.

STS Leaders Meet with Medicare Officials

On September 19, STS surgeon leaders Keith S. Naunheim, Jeffrey B. Rich, David M. Shahian, and Alan M. Speir met with officials from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation to discuss several policies affecting the specialty. The agencies sought the Society's feedback on a proposed rule published in August that laid out quality-based payment models.

The surgeons stressed how the numerous, often conflicting reporting programs imposed by CMS place significant burdens on cardiothoracic surgery practices. They also discussed the proposed bundled payment model for coronary artery bypass grafting, highlighted how clinical data within the STS National Database can lay the foundation for quality-based payment, and reiterated the Society's request for access to Medicare claims data. STS followed up with a [comment letter to CMS](#) this week, elaborating on the topics discussed during the meeting.

Society Comments on Physician Fee Schedule

STS recently [submitted comments to CMS](#) on the 2017 Physician Fee Schedule Proposed Rule. The Society provided feedback on a number of topics within the rule, such as burdensome requirements to document care provided during the global surgical period, incorrect valuation of certain codes, and how CMS can improve payment accuracy.

STS Joins Letters on Lung Cancer Screening, Tobacco Control, and More

The Society recently signed multiorganizational letters that:

- Urged CMS [not to cut reimbursement for lung cancer screening](#). These cuts would prohibit access to lung cancer screening, thus endangering patient health. [Several members of Congress](#) also sent a letter to CMS and the Secretary of Health & Human Services, echoing the Society's concerns;
- Encouraged members of the [House](#) and [Senate](#) appropriations committees to reject any policy riders that would weaken the Food and Drug Administration's authority to regulate tobacco products. Congress is considering a funding bill that contains two such riders;
- Requested that House appropriators provide the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#) (AHRQ) with at least \$334 million in budget authority for fiscal year 2017, which is consistent with current levels. Cutting the AHRQ's budget, as Congress did in fiscal year 2016, has led to decreased production of important research tools, such as National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Reports; and
- Asked the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion to recognize a [National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day](#) during February, which is American Heart Month.

Key Contact Connect

Host a Site Visit

Have you ever thought about showing your legislators around your facility? STS members Jess L. Thompson, MD and Harold M. Burkhart, MD did just that, inviting Rep. Steve Russell (R-OK) to visit The Children's Hospital at Oklahoma University Medical Center earlier this month. The Congressman toured patient care areas and met with patients and their families to discuss their health care journeys. During the visit, Drs. Thompson and Burkhart were able to address specific concerns facing cardiothoracic surgeons and highlight the importance of the STS National Database.

If you would like to host your member of Congress, contact the STS Government Relations office at advocacy@sts.org.



Rep. Steve Russell (R-OK) visited with STS members Jess L. Thompson, MD (left) and Harold M. Burkhart, MD (right).