



Minnesota Academy of Otolaryngology

Annual Meeting/BOG Update
October 13, 2009

Academy Lobbying

Our academy lobbyist gave an update on the main issues:

- Defeat President Obama's proposal for the Independent Medicare Advisory Council. IMAC would be an independent, non-partisan body of doctors and other health experts, appointed by the President, confirmed by the Senate, and serving for five-year terms. The IMAC would issue recommendations as long as their implementation would not result in any increase in the aggregate level of net expenditures under the Medicare program; and either would improve the quality of medical care received by the program's beneficiaries or improve Medicare's efficiency. This would model the Base Realignment and Closure Commission and in theory remove politics from the equation and give power to experts who are well versed in the intricacies of medical reimbursement. The concern is that by allowing the President to appoint the panel, it would become more partisan and political, not less. In addition, it would limit the Academy's ability to lobby for changes to Medicare policy. There is very little support for the idea in Congress at present.
- Repeal the Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate. The SGR is scheduled for a 21.5% reimbursement decrease for physician payments on January 1st 2010. There are two proposals in Congress. The House version proposed an increase in funding to correct the SGR, the Senate version recommended a 0.5% increase in 2010 but in 2011 would give a 10% increase to primary care physicians taking the money away from specialists. This would result in a 35% decrease in reimbursement rates for specialists. There is understandable concern that this divide and conquer approach will be successful in getting the internists to throw the specialists to the wolves.
- Continue to pursue liability reform.
- Monitor and counteract scope of practice issues. Both the Audiologists and the Speech Pathologists have been actively trying to expand their independence. The thrust of all of these measures across the country have been to bypass the physicians to enjoy direct access to patients. A new development is the University of Pittsburg is starting a doctorate program for Speech-Language Pathology. The Academy will be watching this program to determine if the long-term goal is to create a "Doctor" of speech, much like the "Doctor" of audiology.
- Much along these same lines, the Academy has developed a 'Truth-in-Advertising' policy statement. Because of confusion over the term 'Doctor', all advertising must clearly state the degree certificate (i.e. Dr. Smith, M.D. or Dr. Smith, AuD)
- Oppose taxing Cosmetic Surgery Procedures. This has been a hot topic around the country. The Academy has been actively working to oppose these measures when they come up. Proposals in WA, OR & TX were defeated last year.

- Finally some good news. There have been legislative efforts around the country to require insurers to provide hearing aid coverage. Wisconsin became the first state to mandate coverage for pediatric hearing aids.

Academy Financials

There were multiple presentations regarding donating money to the Academy. Two programs were highlighted:

1. ENT PAC: This is the political action committee for the Academy and pays for the above mentioned lobbying activity. It also donates money to the campaigns of legislators sympathetic to the Academy's causes. Only 4% of ENT's donated in 2009. The requested donation is \$365/yr. With all the changes going on in health care at the national level, lobbying is all the more important. Consider donating this year.
2. Millennium Society: This is the non-profit arm of the Academy. It supports programs in education, research, residency, humanitarian aid and international programs. New this year is a memorial endowment for Antonio De la Cruz. Only 120 ENT's have donated this year. The donation level for the Millennium Society is \$1000- many donors manage this with an automatic deduction. The Academy staff would gladly work with anyone to set up a donation plan.

ENTRI

ENTRI is the for-profit arm of the Academy and aims to partner with a diverse group of companies to provide business services to Academy members at a discount. The profits earned from ENTRI are meant to fund Academy programs. In fact, the long term goal is for ENTRI to fund over half of the budget for the Academy. This will enable lower dues in the future. Everyone is encouraged to visit the Academy website for more information on this program.