



The Proceedings

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In this issue...

New MSJWC
Members Page 2

MEDICARE
REMINDER:
New Zip Code
Requirement
for Medicare
Claims Page 3

CMS Selects
WPS as the
New Medicare
Contractor .. Page 3

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A Message from Our President: Stars

by James Appelbaum, MD

I regret to announce that I lost one of my stars. Yes, last year a well-known insurance company, whose CEO got paid \$1.6 billion, gave me two stars. I was so happy. One star was for my “quality” of care, and the other was for my “efficiency.” This year, I kept my “quality” star, but lost my “efficiency” star. The letter informing me of this demotion stated I could learn more by visiting a web site. I visited the site and was greeted by pages of tables delineating my “quality” and “efficiency.” I could not make heads or tails of this information. Now, I think of myself as a pretty smart guy. I made it through college, medical school, and residency, after all. If I don’t understand something, there ought to be someone who can explain it to me. So I called the contact number on the web site. No one has returned the call.

Now, do I really care that I lost a star? Do you care? Well, this insurance company may have paid me a bonus if I kept two stars, but otherwise these quality and efficiency measurements are meaningless. I practice medicine the same way this year as I did last year. Obviously, quality measurement from the top down is irrelevant.

But, don’t we have to do something to guarantee quality? As I learned in Latin class, *quis custodiet ipsos custodios*? Who watches the watchers? If we don’t have insurance companies and the government looking over our shoulders, giving us extra stars, or “pay for performance,” who will guard us?

Let’s take a trip to the grocery store. If I pick out a bunch of bananas and a gallon of milk, I can tell the quality by looking for brown spots and tasting the milk when I get home. I pay for my

groceries in the checkout line. If they aren’t right, I bring them back. The grocery store doesn’t have to bill my grocery

insurance company, mainly because there is no such thing as a grocery insurance company. Grocery stores work by forging a relationship with customers. No one is in the middle. Yes, I know that grocery stores have oversight too, but nothing like we doctors have to suffer. (And if someone can’t pay for the groceries, they get food stamps, and pay the same price as the regular customers, not 25 cents on the dollar as Medicaid pays us.)

So again, how do we guarantee quality and efficiency? Let’s take a clue from the grocery store and most every other industry in this country. Let’s restore the physician-patient relationship and abolish the patient-employer-insurance company-government-physician chain. Policy makers are concerned about nefarious doctors taking advantage of ignorant, defenseless patients, who are unable to determine quality on their own without the help of a kindly insurance company or federal government. In fact, healthcare consumers, armed with proper information, can judge quality easily. How do we get them the information? They are already getting it on the Internet. For example, if a patient presents with low back pain, why not make available guidelines on treatment? The lumbago sufferer would find out that there is no reason for a battery of expensive tests right away; the physician should try analgesics, muscle relaxers, and physical therapy first, if the bedside examination is negative.

(continued to Page 2)



James Appelbaum, MD

A Message from Our President *(continued from Page 1)*

Patients can judge the quality of care for themselves.

How do we guarantee the efficiency? Oversight from above is not going to work. Policy makers want each of us to spend \$40k/physician on electronic medical records, so we can submit data about our "quality" and "efficiency" to the Overlords. What if, instead, we returned the financial power to the patients? They would decide if they think it's worth paying for an MRI for back pain one week after it started, rather than waiting for conservative therapy to take effect. On the other hand, if there were some red flags on the bedside examination, their physician could counsel them that immediate studies are warranted.

Health Savings Accounts are one way to restore the financial power to the patients and take it away from the insurance company-employer-government. These are controversial in some circles because low-income patients might miss out, efficiency could suffer, less healthy patients could be at risk, and the wealthy might get unfair tax

advantages. These deficiencies can be tweaked. I don't mind if the government subsidizes costs for low-income patients while working through the market. The capitalist system remains the most efficient, albeit not the most fair, way to allocate resources. Take the example of refractive eye surgery to see how costs have gone down and efficiency has increased, when the market is allowed to work.

We doctors need to fight to maintain our physician-patient relationships unencumbered by all the outside forces fighting to tear us apart. Staying involved in your county, state, and AMA medical societies is the approach. I'll take my AMA caduceus any day over an insurance company star.

Finally, it has been a pleasure to serve as your president this year. Please contact our MSJWC office or me if you have any questions or if there is any way we can assist you. ■

Wy/Jo Care Welcomes New Volunteers

The Medical Society of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties Foundation welcomes the following specialists to the Wy/Jo Care program. Each has pledged to see low-income, uninsured residents of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties through the Wy/Jo Care program.

David Amsterdam MD
Randel Brown MD
Kevin Canon MD
Christine Cheng MD
Corinna Cooper MD
William Crawford OD
Scott Ellison MD
Todd Hildreth OD
Randolph Jackson MD
Andrew Jefferson MD
Cherie Johnson OD
Stephen Lile OD
Roger Newth OD
Timothy Stout MD
Lisa Waxman MD ■

New MSJWC Members

Robyn Hart, MD
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 12000 W 110th St Ste 100
 Overland Park, KS 66210
 913-469-0002

Paul Chan, MD
Cardiovascular Disease
 4330 Wornall Rd Ste 2000
 Kansas City, MO 64111
 816-931-1883

Carlos Rivas-Gotz, MD
Cardiovascular Disease
 4330 Wornall Rd Ste 2000
 Kansas City, MO 64111
 816-931-1883

John Price, MD
General Surgery
 4323 Wornall 3rd Flr Peet Center
 Kansas City, MO 64111
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 F-816-932-4687

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Internal Medicine – Geriatric
 8800 State Line Rd
 Shawnee Mission, KS 66202
 P-913-383-9099
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Emergency Medicine
 9100 W 74th
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 Shawnee Mission, KS 66206
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 F-913-648-6139

CMS Selects WPS as the New Medicare Contractor

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that Wisconsin Physicians Service Health Insurance Corporation (WPS) has been awarded the contract for the combined administration of Part A and Part B Medicare fee-for-service claims in Jurisdiction 5, covering Kansas, Iowa, Missouri and Nebraska. These changes stem from Section 911 of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) requiring the Secretary to take the needed steps by 2011 to implement Medicare Contracting Reform and thereby replace all current intermediaries and carriers with Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC); reducing the number of contractors from 51 to 23. This five year contract has an estimated value of approximately \$225 million. WPS is one of the larger Part B carriers in the nation, currently

covering Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota and processing in excess of 100 million claims a year.

Wheatlands/Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Kansas will begin to transition all work to WPS concluding their responsibilities March 1, 2008. Once this transition is complete the Kansas Medicare website will likely disappear. We recommend that you save any information/documentation (medical review articles, communiqués) that you have used in your practice should any questions arise.

CMS has stated that providers will not be adversely affected by the transition of work however a transition as large as this one is bound to have its issues.

You may visit the WPS website at: www.wpsic.com/medicare/provider/provhome.shtml. ■

MEDICARE REMINDER:

New ZIP Code Requirement for Medicare Claims

Effective October 1, 2007 for Medicare services rendered in one of the ZIP code areas listed below will have to have the nine-digit ZIP code for that area or have claims deny as unprocessable. Medicare reimburses for services based on the locality even though the entire state of Kansas has only one payment rate, previously the Johnson and Wyandotte county area was considered a separate contracted area by CMS. This information is needed to help the new Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) pay at the correct fee schedule rate. This does not apply if your pay-to address is in one of the ZIP codes mentioned. It is strictly for services rendered on or after October 1, 2007.

To see a complete listing for ZIP codes effected and the CMS CLN Matters article go to: www.cms.hhs.gov/MLN MattersArticles/downloads/mm5208.pdf.

66012	63005	63071	64034	64147
66013	63015	63072	64048	64439
66018	63020	63087	64061	64444
66021	63023	63348	64062	64484
66025	63028	63357	64070	64792
66083	63030	63535	64075	64733
66102	63041	63548	64077	64784
66109	63060	63627	64080	66112
63069	64024	64082	■	



Medical Society of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties Foundation, Inc.
Promoting Healthcare for the Uninsured

Join the over 175 doctors who have agreed to be Wy/Jo Care volunteer physicians

Many of the low-income, uninsured receive primary care services through safety net clinics. However, there is limited access to specialist care through these clinics. In response to this problem, the Medical Society of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties launched Wy/Jo Care. This specialty referral program connects safety net clinics providing primary care for low-income, uninsured patients with specialists who are willing to donate their time and

expertise. Routing the referrals through the Wy/Jo Care office will ensure organized, efficient referrals, make equitable use of volunteer physicians and ease the burden of seeing low-income, uninsured patients.

To learn more about the Wy/Jo Care program and becoming a volunteer, visit our web site at www.msjwc.org or call the Medical Society at 913.403.0544. ■



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Alan Hancock, MD

**Physician Preceptor
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Arthur Snow, MD

**Golf Tournament and
Entertainment Chair**
Cranston Cederlind, MD

Plan to Attend these Upcoming Events

May 2 and 3
**Kansas Medical Society
Annual Meeting**
Doubletree Hotel, Overland Park

September 23
Recognition Dinner
Overland Park Convention Center,
Overland Park

December 6
Holiday Dinner
Milburn Country Club, Shawnee

