

# Keystone Surgeon



keystone chapter  
american college of surgeons

Summer 2008 Edition

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE KEYSTONE CHAPTER, AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

## President's Message

by Anthony D. Dippolito, MD, FACS



**G**reetings to all members and non-members. Summer is here and we are readying ourselves for our annual educational seminar in Harrisburg in November. The agenda is a good one and pertinent to all surgical specialties. There will be an accentuated focus on the legislative issues facing medicine today.

As you know, this July holiday has brought to us another threatening scenario to patient care in our state and in our country. Our Congress had passed a bill to prevent Medicare reimbursement cuts that automatically would have taken place on July 1st. Just before the holiday the Senate, however, struck down their end of the legislation that would have prevented this 10.6% decrease. During this process, we had been called upon by our societies and colleges to voice our position to our Congressmen and Senators via telephone and e-mail. In spite of this, the Senate voted just before the holiday not to support this bill (Medicare Improvements for Providers Act- H.R. 6331). The ultimate effect of this would have been devastating to our patients and our profession. During this process, I was given the privilege to represent you and our patients at the Capitol. Between the political football and the drive to decrease Medicare costs, it seemed uncertain what the ultimate outcome would be.

Right now I know many of us are working as many as 90 hours a week in order to pay our malpractice premiums and rising overhead. A decrease in reimbursement like this could have been a coffin nail to many of our practices. Thankfully, the day after our visit to the Capitol, the Senate reconvened specifically to reconsider this issue and the Senate voted yes by over a two-thirds majority. Non-the-less, the President vetoed the bill and a veto-breaking vote was required and obtained.

What does all of this mean? Our profession requires a lifetime of preparation in order to develop the skills we employ in the most honorable profession. Yet, the economic pressures generated from what has become every Americans inalienable right to have health care are becoming unaffordable. The subsequent fallout with overwork and decreasing remuneration has made life difficult for the medical profession. More changes are inevitable.

It is incumbent upon us to be attentive and to be involved with this process. I have seen some physicians retire early. And for those of you who know me, I have done my share of complaining. The answer, however, entails involvement by supporting those groups who support our patients and our profession. We must look to the future. We must support the Keystone Chapter with its educational endeavors, and its political interactions with the College membership. We must strive to leave a legacy to our children as physicians and patients through our stewardship today. ●

## Online Registration for 2008 Clinical Congress Now Open

*Excerpted with permission from the July 18, 2008 issue of ACS NewsScope, American College of Surgeons*

**“Leading the Way to Quality, Safety, and Excellence” is the theme for the 94th Annual Clinical Congress of the American College of Surgeons, which will be held in San Francisco, CA, October 12-16, 2008, at the Moscone Convention Center.**

**P**remier hands-on learning. Presentation of leading-edge surgical research. Exceptional peer access, and, when requested, mentoring. These are the hallmarks of the American College of Surgeons Annual Clinical Congress. For surgeons dedicated to improving the care of the surgical patient and safeguarding standards of care, there is no better learning opportunity. Regardless of your specialty area, you will find unique programs among the lectures, skills-oriented and didactic postgraduate courses, panel

discussions, Surgical Forum sessions, specialty and multidisciplinary sessions, and video-based education sessions.

Detailed Clinical Congress program information, including registration and housing, can be found on the ACS Web site at <http://www.facs.org/clincon2008/index.html>.

Registration:

<http://www.facs.org/clincon2008/registration/registration.html>

Hotel Reservations:

<http://www.facs.org/clincon2008/hotel/housing.html> ●

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## More Than \$36 Million Paid to Participants in the 2007 PQRI

*Excerpted with permission from the July 18, 2008 issue of ACS NewsScope, American College of Surgeons*

**O**n July 15, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS) announced that a total of more than \$36 million in bonuses are being paid to many of the more than 56,700 health care professionals who satisfactorily reported quality information to Medicare under the 2007 Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI). Individual physicians, group practices, and other PQRI eligible professionals should receive their payments within the next few weeks. The

average incentive amount for individual professionals totals more than \$600, and the mean bonus payment to group practices is more than \$4,700. More information about the PQRI program, including how eligible professionals can participate and the criteria for obtaining an incentive payment, is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PQRI>. To view a press release about 2007 bonus payments, go to [http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/media/press\\_releases.asp](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/apps/media/press_releases.asp). ●

## **KCACs 2008 Annual Scientific Meeting**

### **November 7, 2008**

**T**he 2008 Annual Scientific Meeting of the Keystone Chapter of the American College of Surgeons will be held Friday, November 7, 2008 at the Pennsylvania Medical Society headquarters in Harrisburg. The meeting will begin at 7:00 a.m. and conclude at 5:00 p.m. The theme of the meeting is Pennsylvania Surgery — Looking to the Future. Following is the preliminary agenda. ●

7:00 - 8:00 am	Continental Breakfast/Visit Exhibits
8:00 - 8:15 am	Welcome and Remarks
8:15 - 9:00 am	Laparoscopic Colorectal Surgery: Where are we now and where are we going? Roberto C. M. Bergamaschi, MD, FACS
9:00 - 10:00 am	Resident Papers
10:00 - 10:45 am	Surgical Management of Obesity John S. Monk, Jr., MD, FACS
10:45 - 11:15 am	Break/Visit Exhibit
11:15 - 12:00 pm	Commonwealth Medical School Robert M. D'Alessandri, MD
12:30 - 1:30 pm	Lunch & Legislative Question and Answer Representative Scott Boyd (R), 43rd Legislative District Representative Bryan Cutler (R), 100th Legislative District Representative Eugene DePasquale (D), 95th Legislative District Representative Kathy Watson (R), 144th Legislative District
1:30 - 2:30 pm	Resident Papers
2:30 - 3:00 pm	Break/Visit Exhibits
3:00 - 3:45 pm	Disaster Preparedness – Paul K. Carlton, Jr., MD, FACS, LT General, USAF (Ret.), Director, Homeland Security, Texas A&M Health Science Center
3:45 - 4:30 pm	Surgeons and State Advocacy – Division of Advocacy & Health Policy, American College of Surgeons
4:30 pm	Awards Presentation
5:00 pm	Adjourn

**Mark your calendars and plan to attend  
this exciting meeting!**

## Surgery Oral Examination Course Schedule Set for 2008

*Excerpted with permission from the July 18, 2008 issue of ACS NewsScope, American College of Surgeons*

**T**he Dartmouth Clinical Performance & Oral Examinations in Surgery courses will be offered October 10-12, just prior to the annual Clinical Congress of the American College of Surgeons in San Francisco. This three-day course will provide an opportunity for surgeons who have failed the certifying examination or senior residents who anticipate difficulty with the certifying examination to receive individual feedback on their oral skills and knowledge base by selected national faculty. All participants will be videotaped in a mock certifying examination on Sunday and

assigned a debriefing session. Each debriefing will include a behavioral analysis, content areas of weakness, a plan, and questions for review, along with a DVD of their mock examination. In addition, suggestions will be made with regard to specific sessions at the Clinical Congress the surgeons should attend based on weaknesses in the participant's knowledge base.

The full description and registration information are available at <http://oralboardreview.net>. Questions about the program should be sent to [Pamela.Rowland@Dartmouth.edu](mailto:Pamela.Rowland@Dartmouth.edu). ●

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## State Society President: Mcare Will Be Priority This Fall

*Reprinted with permission, Pennsylvania Medical Society*

**I**n a message to members, Pennsylvania Medical Society President Peter S. Lund, MD, said that while Mcare abatement and phase-out remain unresolved until the fall, physicians must continue to work together to protect health care for Pennsylvanians.

He notes that the Society has been successful in generating strong, bi-partisan interest among legislators in Mcare phase-out and in making clear our support for expanded coverage for the uninsured.

Dr. Lund said, "The truth is we've convinced the legislature on Mcare. Our goals are still very attainable. While House Democratic leaders successfully blocked our efforts to re-insert a 'pure' Mcare abatement extension amendment—without linking it

to Pa ABC or to PHC4—there has never been a losing substantive vote on extending the Mcare abatement program. The funds remain intact in the state budget to provide for Mcare abatement when the political impasse is resolved. Mcare abatements can be retroactively applied for those physicians who choose to make that request."

This fall, as we approach the remaining weeks of the legislative session, he urged members to reconsider their commitment to patient advocacy, and to "continue to tell us your stories as you, your patients, and your practice are impacted by Mcare, Medicare, and other key issues."

To read Dr. Lund's letter, go to [www.pamedsoc.org](http://www.pamedsoc.org). ●

## Blues Merger Oversight Bill Becomes Law

*Reprinted with permission, Pennsylvania Medical Society*

A bill increasing state oversight of the proposed merger of Highmark and Independence Blue Cross (IBC) was signed by the governor on July 9, 2008. House Bill 1150 includes language to authorize the Pennsylvania Insurance Department to approve or reject the merger and allow the House and Senate insurance committees to weigh in on it as well.

In testimony at a July 10 public hearing in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Medical Society President Peter S. Lund, MD, reiterated the Society's position that no merger should move forward until the benefits to patients and health care professionals are clearly demonstrated. ●

## New Features Will Streamline and Enhance Your Clinical Congress Experience

*Excerpted with permission from the July 25, 2008 issue of ACS NewsScope, American College of Surgeons*

Attendees at the 94th Annual Clinical Congress in San Francisco, which will take place October 12-16, will find many changes that are designed to make the meeting an even more meaningful experience. Designed by the Program Committee of the College and the Division of Education, the many new features will enhance the Clinical Congress program, make better use of attendees' time, and make it easier for surgeons to attend the sessions that interest them the most.

Beginning this year, the Clinical Congress will be organized in Discipline- and Theme-Based Tracks, which have been designed to focus specifically on the needs of various surgical specialties and learner groups. A new block schedule will also be introduced, with standardized session start- and end- times, and a longer lunch period to allow attendees the chance to participate in one of the new "Meet the Professor Luncheons," or to view the technical or scientific exhibits. On display in San Francisco will be nearly three times the number of scientific exhibits that have been displayed in recent years. Increases in the amount of new research being presented at the Clinical Congress can also be seen in the changes to the Papers Session program, which is now theme-based and scheduled to total nearly 100 oral presentations this year. For more information or to register for the Clinical Congress, go to: <http://www.facs.org/clincon2008/index.html>. ●

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## New PQRI Resources Posted on ACS Members-Only Web Portal

*Excerpted with permission from the July 25, 2008 issue of ACS NewsScope, American College of Surgeons*

The College's members-only Web portal, e-FACS.org, has been updated to include new information for surgeons who have questions about the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid's Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI). Resources available through the Web portal include:

- PQRI Publications
- ACS Presentations/Webinars
- PQRI Performance Measures
- PQRI Results and Payment Information
- New 2008 PQRI Information

- Data Registry Reporting Tips
- Proposed Changes to 2009 PQRI

To visit the Web page, go to [http://efacs.org/portal/page/portal/ACS\\_Content/Advocacy](http://efacs.org/portal/page/portal/ACS_Content/Advocacy). For more information regarding PQRI, contact [cburley@facs.org](mailto:cburley@facs.org). ●

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## ACS Web Portal Hits Milestone

*Excerpted with permission from the August 1, 2008 issue of ACS NewsScope, American College of Surgeons*

The innovative features on e-FACS.org, the members-only Web portal of the American College of Surgeons, are becoming increasingly popular, as evidenced by the fact that the portal recently surpassed 1 million page views. Usage statistics indicate that approximately 7,500 unique visitors visit the portal each quarter, and that the number is increasing.

Here are just a few of the things you can do in the portal:

- Track CME credits
- Update your College profile
- Log your cases
- List all of your favorite Web sites in one place
- Check out the newly redesigned Women Surgeons community

- View the Minimally Invasive Surgery "Image of the Month"

A work-in-progress, the ACS Web Portal continues to grow and develop daily, so if you have not done so already, please come and see for yourself why more and more members are taking advantage of this FREE useful tool for members of the College. Simply head over to <http://www.efacs.org> and log in with your ACS membership ID. You can change your login and password at any time.

The College's Web portal is being directed by George F. Sheldon, MD, FACS, who is Editor-in-Chief, and Lazar J. Greenfield, MD, FACS, the portal's Associate Editor. ●

## Scientific Exhibits to be Displayed at Clinical Congress

*Excerpted with permission from the August 1, 2008 issue of ACS NewsScope, American College of Surgeons*

**M**ore than 350 Scientific Exhibits will be presented October 13-15 during the 94th Annual Clinical Congress of the American College of Surgeons, which will be held in San Francisco. To allow for optimal viewing for each surgical specialty, the exhibit categories will correspond with the daily tracks that are a new feature debuting during this year's meeting. The scientific exhibits will be on display at the North Hall of the

Moscone Center, and authors will be on hand during the lunch break to discuss their results and answer questions. The top Posters of Exceptional Merit will be presented on Tuesday, October 14, from 1:15-2:15 pm. The top exhibit will also be named.

For more information, contact [kanthony@facs.org](mailto:kanthony@facs.org). For additional information or to register for the Clinical Congress, go to <http://www.facs.org/clincon2008/>. ●

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## Ario Confirmed as Insurance Commissioner

*Reprinted with permission, Pennsylvania Medical Society*

**T**he state Senate on July 3, 2008, unanimously confirmed Joel Ario as insurance commissioner.

Ario was nominated for the position in June 2007, but his confirmation was held up by Senate Republications—led by Sen. Don White (R-Indiana), chair of the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee—who wanted two conditions met.

Republicans said they wanted legislation giving the legislature oversight in the proposed

merger of Highmark and Independence Blue Cross (IBC). That legislation is on its way to the governor for his signature.

They also wanted Ario to prove he would be independent and not follow the instructions of Gov. Ed Rendell in his independent regulatory functions. White has indicated that Ario is fulfilling this condition. ●

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## Medical Liability Insurer Lowers Rates

*Reprinted with permission, Pennsylvania Medical Society*

**P**roMutual Group has dropped its medical liability insurance rates for Pennsylvania physicians by 6 percent. The new rates were effective July 1, 2008, and apply to both new and renewal policies.

The company said it decided to lower its rates after examining medical liability claim data for individual physicians and surgeons. ●



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