

Washington State Orthopaedic Association Newsletter

November 2009



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Letter from the President

Thank you for your support of our Washington State Orthopedic Association. In response to a well organized legal assault on an orthopedist's right to employ physical therapists, your dues were raised last year to \$750. Because we do not anticipate additional significant legal costs this year we are decreasing our dues to \$400. Your membership will continue to pay the tuition of our annual meeting. On the behalf of the board of directors of the WSOA I want to thank you for your continued membership.

I'd like to summarize some of the highlights your organization has achieved this year. I would also point out that there is no other organization that will represent your specific interests in Washington State except for the WSOA.

Since 2007 WSOA has raised nearly \$450,000 to assist in the legal defense of Benton-Franklin Orthopedic Associates. We would like to see the multitude of clinics and professional organizations that contributed to this legal defense. This includes not only AAOS but also the Washington State Medical Association. The legal ramifications of this suit represent a serious assault on the private practice of medicine. If the suit is lost, it will be impossible to hire physical therapists inside an orthopedic clinic. This is now the state of affairs in South Carolina. The suit clearly represents a threat to all ancillary services inside an orthopedic office and also a threat to the hiring of any professional who is not a medical doctor. On Tuesday, November 17, 2009 a series of legal steps finally led to oral arguments being presented at the Washington State Supreme Court. We are optimistic but have been advised that the court's decision will probably take a few months.

During 2009 we coordinated efforts with the WSMA and other groups to prevent legislation that would eliminate physician ownership of sophisticated in-office imaging such as an MRI. The result of these coordinated efforts was the avoidance of legislation now in effect in the State of Maryland. A task force including one of your WSOA Board members is creating guidelines that will guide state-controlled healthcare on appropriate utilization. An effort is also being made to coordinate imaging paperwork requirements for all health care delivery systems through the insurance commissioner.

During the last month you were well represented as representative Tom Campbell withdrew legislation that would have required all pre-surgical patients to have been tested for MRSA. Whereas we are obviously committed to avoiding infections, the proposed legislation would have created an incredibly costly and inefficient approach at this goal.

We had a very well received annual meeting program November 13 and 14th 2009. The content during both Friday and Saturday sessions was a blend of extremely well organized scientific data as well as a Saturday afternoon review of several socio-economic topics. We were honored to have Dr. John Callaghan, president-elect of the AAOS, present the Academy's current positions on health care reform. He summarized the

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Update Your Contact Information

The WSOA feels it is critical to be able to keep its members up to date on important issues affecting your practice and patient care. Please be sure your contact information is current with our office. You may email contact information updates to Darla White, WSOA Association Executive at ddw@WSMA.org.

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patients to our Infectious Disease clinic that have a history of MRSA infections and work on decreasing their colony counts before surgery. We also screen patients that request MRSA screening.

This approach also would ignore all the other emerging antibiotic resistant organisms that are evolving. It seems that if new legislation is needed to protect the public in a hospital setting, defining standards for infection control measures for hospital staff, isolation procedures and indications, including hand-washing rules and protocols would provide a broader scope and be more effective for all infective agents that may arise.

We have heard from Tim Layton at WSMA that this legislation is being reconsidered.

The WSMA Interspecialty Advocacy Council meeting was held Oct 17, and featured Cynthia Brown, Chief Lobbyist for the AMA regarding Health Care Reform. She gave us an update that pointed out that the congress is undecided on the final form of reform. Obama's proposals for physicians includes, rebasing Medicare physician payment formula (we will probably take a 5% cut); remove physician administered drugs from the SGR "pool" (this contributes enormously to the annual Medicare budget deficit related to physician reimbursement); consider demonstration projects for medical liability alternatives (state based); the FTC is considering revisions to antitrust limits on clinical integration for physicians. She appealed for grassroots support for the SGR repeal, senate bill S1776, which we now know failed. So due to the flawed SGR formula, paying doctors is still a huge budget deficit that grows larger each year, and each year the congress passes a one year fix that continues to enlarge the deficit, rather than accounting for it in the budget and clearly paying for it. The concept of "Medical Home" will probably make it in terms of functional health reform, although no one wants to go back to the concept of "gatekeeper" in congress and so choice continues to be important.

We heard from Richard Onizuka, PhD, Director, Health Care Policy, WA St HCA about the statewide Health Information Exchange (HIE) project to be funded by the federal HITECH act and state funds that will put about 12 million dollars, in our state, into technical infrastructure for e-prescribing, lab orders and results, public health reporting, quality reporting, and eligibility and claims. There will be a four year ramp up starting in 2011 that will make funding available to physician practices to facilitate participation. This is to augment the EMR. The WSMA will have info available on their website to begin education about what is available and when grants will be available.

The meeting ended with a review of WA St HCA project to use evidence based decision making to make state insurance coverage rules through the Health Technology Assessment program by Leah Hole-Curry. This is a program to manage state resources, using evidence in the literature to approve or deny payment for procedures and imaging and to manage variation in billing levels. The concept of pre-approval kept coming to mind.

Lyle Sorensen, MD
 2010 First Vice President

November Newsletter Sponsor

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connects medical and claims professionals for workers' compensation and auto-casualty Independent Medical Evaluations (IMEs). IME Exchange is not a traditional broker or panel company. "I like to think of us as the Expedia, Monster or eHarmony for medical assessments." says Jody Sales, VP of Operations for IME Exchange.

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Research has shown there are not enough medical specialists to meet demand in the state of Washington, and many parts of the state are not represented by the main specialties including Orthopedics. "IME Exchange offers computerized one-stop shopping for independent medical examinations, from initial referrals to billing that can simplify an added service in your practice and enhance your bottom line." says WSOA member Charles Brooks M.D.

There is no cost or contract required to be a part of the IME Exchange network. However, you must be approved by the Department of Labor & Industries to include workers' compensation IMEs as part of your practice portfolio. Jody Sales can be reached at 888.592.3332 or email jsales@imeexchange.com.

Supplier Sponsorships

As an ongoing effort to offer our members value added benefits, the WSOA is in the process of creating an on-line directory of medical suppliers. We will also be offering sponsorship opportunities in our monthly newsletter. Each monthly sponsor will receive article space to draw attention to their goods or services. Please feel free to pass this information on to suppliers you think might have an interest in this opportunity. For information contact Darla White at 206-956-3642 or email at ddw@wsma.org

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WSOA-BFOA Legal Defense Fund

Ten percent of your contribution will go towards a newly created WSOA Advocacy Fund to help with future advocacy and defense funds efforts. Send your check or credit card information to WSOA-BFOA Legal Defense Fund, c/o WSMA, 2033 Sixth Ave., Suite 1100, Seattle WA 98121. Or call the WSOA office at 206-956-3642.

In Memoriam

Please forward information regarding the passing of any WSOA members to Darla White at ddw@wsma.org so that we may share the information with your fellow colleagues.

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