

ACP Connecticut Chapter

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2/14/2020 11:16:50 AM

Governor's Update - February 2020



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Rebecca Andrews, MD, FACP - Governor

"May your choices reflect your hopes not your fears."

Nelson Mandela

Dear Colleagues,

We are at the start of an election year that once again has healthcare at its center. I have spent a good deal of time debating what changes might bring about better health outcomes for our patients without the astronomical cost associated with where we are now. These discussions have spanned the dinner table with family, conferences with colleagues, and most recently, as part of the Medical Practice and Quality Committee for the national ACP.

I understand politics and advocacy can be emotional topics. The last presidential election brought a fair amount of discord between friends, family, and colleagues, BUT we cannot sit back without having a voice in changing what is so needed in our country: reduction of spending that does not improve health outcomes, protection of our vulnerable, and improving the health of our nation. Although the debate has been a part of politics for decades, the ACP sought to tackle the topic and published a “New Vision of Healthcare” with several articles in the supplemental published by the Annals of Internal Medicine January 21st. Our very own Rob McLean, previous governor of the CT chapter and current ACP President authored a commentary with other ACP leaders that is a must read and can be found online <https://annals.org/aim/issue/938337> or in print. Here is a brief overview:

ACP Calls for Comprehensive Reform of U.S. Health in a Series of Papers Offering a New Vision of Health Care

ACP has released a comprehensive series of policy papers that outline ACP’s vision of a better health care system for all, published as a supplement in Annals of Internal Medicine. “Better is Possible: The American College of Physicians Vision for the U.S. Health Care System” issues a bold call to action, challenging the U.S. to implement systematic reform of the health care system, and provides an ambitious new vision for better health care for all and expansive policy recommendations for how to achieve it.

ACP’s “Envisioning a Better Health Care System for All” series of policy papers addresses issues related to coverage and cost of care, health care delivery and payment system reform, and reducing barriers to care and social determinants of health. They offer specific recommendations supported by evidence about ways the U.S. can change the status quo and improve the health care system for all.

ACP developed the papers based on examination and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current U.S. health care system and ACP’s analysis of the major problems with American health care. Using the best available data and evidence and a comprehensive review of the literature and recommendations as their foundation, potential solutions outlined in the papers build on ACP’s day-to-day

advocacy to support the daily practice and well-being of its members and health of patients.

NATIONAL PROGRAMS AND NEWS

Federal appeals court rules individual mandate is unconstitutional, sends it back to a lower court to decide constitutionality of the entire law

The American College of Physicians is warning that the survival of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is at risk after a federal appeals court left its fate uncertain.

The issue is whether the ACA can exist without the individual mandate, which the federal appeals court said in its ruling was unconstitutional. The legal issue threatens ACA benefits such as preexisting condition protections, essential benefit requirements and funding for Medicaid expansion.

“The overturning of the ACA would be tragic and harmful to millions,” said Dr. Robert McLean, president of ACP. “We have no choice but to speak up.”

On Dec. 18, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled that the ACA's mandate requiring insurance coverage violates the Constitution “while sending back to a lower court the question of whether the rest of the law can remain without it,” according to The Washington Post.

As the Post notes, Congress has already zeroed out the individual mandate's financial penalty. However, it reports, “the panel's 2-to-1 ruling leaves the rest of the sprawling statute in limbo, catapulting questions of insurance coverage and consumer health-care protections to the forefront of the 2020 presidential and congressional campaigns.”

ACP has taken a strong stand on this court case since the state of Texas filed a lawsuit challenging the ACA in federal court last December. ACP joined an amicus brief with the American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, and American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

As Dr. McLean explained, amicus briefs, or “friend of the court” briefs, “are legal arguments provided to courts explaining the rationale for positions in a case. In legal cases that touch upon health care issues where the ACP has established policy, such as our support of the ACA, the ACP joins with other organizations to file

such amicus briefs. Typically, we work with other professional societies.”

The amicus brief in this case states: “Even if this Court concludes that . . . the minimum coverage provision [individual mandate] cannot be fairly interpreted as a lawful exercise of Congress' taxing power, that provision is severable from the remainder of the ACA. Plaintiffs insist, however, that the entire ACA must be enjoined because the minimum coverage provision cannot be severed from the remainder of the ACA. That argument is meritless.”

The brief also reminds judges that the health and lives of millions of people are at stake. If the ACA is struck down, Americans will be in danger of losing its many protections, including mandatory coverage for pre-existing conditions, requirements that insurers cover a core set of essential medical services, funding for Medicaid expansion, Medicare coverage of preventive services at no out-of-pocket cost for seniors, and bans on insurers imposing annual or lifetime limits on coverage.

What's next? After the case is sent back to the district court to answer the question of whether the rest of the law can remain it may eventually make its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, but that date could be months or years away.

“We feel obligated to continue to advocate for as long as necessary,” McLean said. “ACP has a respected voice and will continue to use it appropriately.”

Now Available - 2019 Novel Coronavirus: A Physician's Guide from ACP

ACP has developed the following educational content that is freely available to the healthcare community as a public service of ACP in response to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Novel Coronavirus: A Physician's Guide:

[https://www.acponline.org/cme-moc/online-learning-center/novel-coronavirus-a-physicians-guide?
_ga=2.143706357.1981632455.1581594935-
456066592.1581594935](https://www.acponline.org/cme-moc/online-learning-center/novel-coronavirus-a-physicians-guide?_ga=2.143706357.1981632455.1581594935-456066592.1581594935)

Coronavirus: What the Clinician Needs to Know podcast

<https://www.acponline.org/cme-moc/online-learning-center/novel-coronavirus-what-the-clinician-needs-to-know-interview?>

[_ga=2.165382015.1981632455.1581594935-456066592.1581594935](#)

You can even obtain CME credit without charge for both.

CLINICAL CARE GUIDELINES

ACP and Annals of IM released a guideline on testosterone supplementation in men which can be reviewed here:

[https://annals.org/aim/fullarticle/2758507/testosterone-treatment-adult-men-age-related-low-testosterone-clinical-guideline?](https://annals.org/aim/fullarticle/2758507/testosterone-treatment-adult-men-age-related-low-testosterone-clinical-guideline?_ga=2.63605871.1981632455.1581594935-456066592.1581594935)
[_ga=2.63605871.1981632455.1581594935-456066592.1581594935](#)

CONNECTICUT PROGRAMS AND NEWS

ADVOCACY

On February 19, 2020, the Public Health Committee will hold a public hearing. On the agenda will be a bill to repeal the religious exemption for vaccinations. Declining immunization rates have led to outbreaks of measles in California, Washington, Oregon and even in our neighboring state, New York. ACP and the CT State Medical Society support the concept of mandatory vaccinations to protect the population at large by achieving immunization rates that prevent the transmission of highly infectious diseases like measles. High immunization rates are particularly important in protecting the members of our society who for medical reasons cannot be vaccinated.

It is now time for physicians to take a stand and have your voice be heard.

Please contact your state legislators and consider joining your CSMS Advocacy Team on February 19, 2020 at the State Legislative Office to present testimony.

If you would like to testify on February 19 at the public hearing or submit written testimony, please contact Ken Ferrucci at kferrucci@csms.org.

Your VOICE needs to be heard.

MEDICAL STUDENT COMMITTEE
Proud to be GIM

The Proud to be GIM event will be on February 25th from 5:30pm-8:00pm and will be held at the Frank H. Netter, MD School of Medicine in North Haven: 370 Bassett Road, North Haven, CT, 06473 Room MNH-105.

Physicians will be at various tables that have different themes to facilitate discussion regarding general internal medicine. Themes will include topics such as lifestyle and hospital medicine. Students will rotate among the tables, the goal being to inform and inspire students.

5:30pm-6:00pm - Social Time

6:00pm - Dinner Served

6:30pm - Rotations Among Tables

Please RSVP to: Angela.Mirabella@quinnipiac.edu

Medical Student Story Slam 2020

ACP is hosting a story slam event specifically for medical students at Internal Medicine Meeting 2020 in Los Angeles, as part of Mastering Medicine Together for Students.

Story Slam Theme: Resiliency

Think of a time during medical school when you overcame a challenge. Did you have an experience that dispelled worries or anxieties? Is there advice you would give yourself as a younger medical student that you know now? Did your tenacity remedy an unfortunate situation? Answer with an inspirational five-minute story that exemplifies resiliency.

Directions to Apply: To apply use the link below. You will also need a 60-second video clip of yourself presenting some aspect of your story.

https://forms.acponline.org/webform/medical-student-story-slam-submission-form?_ga=2.72977363.1981632455.1581594935-456066592.1581594935

The deadline to apply is February 20, 2020. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance by March 31, 2020.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Current ACP Medical Student Member
- Internal Medicine Meeting 2020 Registrant
- Available on Friday, April 24 from 11:00am to 1:00pm

2020 CONNECTICUT ACP AND NATIONAL AWARDS

The Awards Committee of the CT ACP Chapter is kicking off another busy year. January marks the beginning of each awards cycle and the Committee is actively soliciting nominations from throughout Connecticut for both statewide and national awards. From the CT Chapter, there are regional awards for Connecticut internists recognizing ACP participation and Leadership (Laureate Award), a career devoted to teaching and medical education (George F. Thornton Teaching Award), and a new award last year recognizing early career physicians who have made exceptional contributions to medical education (Early Career Physician Teaching Award). The Awards Committee is particularly interested in soliciting nominations from the community for the Henry Gift Distinguished Internist Award which recognizes a Connecticut internist, often in private or non-academic practice, who has distinguished him/herself by continuing medical education, a lifetime of outstanding service to the care of patients, and ongoing, active participation and notable leadership within the local medical community. The CT ACP also intermittently recognizes a Connecticut legislator and/or public servant who has demonstrated leadership and strong advocacy in areas of legislation or public policy that improves healthcare delivery to our patients (Legislator/Public Servant of the Year Award). Another CT ACP Award, the Volunteerism Award, recognizes an internal medicine physician whose volunteer efforts have made a substantial and enduring contribution to his/her local community, to the country, and/or internationally. Except for the Gift and Legislator/Public Servant of the Year Awards, awardees must be active members, Fellows, or Masters of the American College of Physicians within Connecticut.

At the National level, the American College of Physicians also annually bestows a number of important awards. These awards, including the prestigious Mastership of the American College of Physicians, are described further on the ACP website: <http://www.acponline.org/about-acp/awards-masterships-and-competitions/acp-award-mastership-categories>. Should you be interested in nominating an individual for one of the Connecticut or national ACP awards, please contact either our Governor, Dr. Rebecca Andrews (reandrews@uchc.edu) or one of the Awards Committee Chairs, Dr. Rosemarie Fisher (rosemarie.fisher@yale.edu) or Dr. Eric Mazur (emazurmd@gmail.com). The deadline for submitting both National and Chapter award nominations is July 1, 2020.

Ideas or comments? Send them to me through the following venues: ctacp@lutinemanagement.com for responding to these newsletters or our facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ctacp/> and follow us on twitter @ConnecticutACP.

Are you aware of the Chapter's new communication channels? Join us and learn more about our current initiatives.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ctacp/>

<https://twitter.com/ConnecticutACP>

"Keep your face always toward the sunshine—and shadows will fall behind you." —Walt Whitman

Respectfully,

Rebecca Andrews, MD, FACP - Governor

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