



Dear ENT Advocacy Network Member:

September 11, 2018

Legislative and political activity directly affects our practices and our patients. As a leading advocate for otolaryngology-head and neck surgery, we hope you enjoy reading this edition of The ENT Advocate, your premier source of advocacy information for the specialty!

## Lead Story

### AAO-HNS Comments on Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Proposed Rule

On September 10, the AAO-HNS submitted a [comment letter](#) to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) addressing several components of the CY 2019 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) proposed rule. The Academy's comments focused on Medicare's proposed changes to documentation requirements, coding and payment for Evaluation and Management (E/M) services, application of the MPPR to E/M services, and the pricing and composition of balloon sinus surgery kits. The AAO-HNS also joined 170 co-signatories from the House of Medicine in sending a letter to CMS Administrator Verma on the rule. The coalition [letter](#) specifically expressed concerns regarding the collapse of payment rates for E/M services for new and established patients, as well as opposition to payment reductions for procedures reported on the same day as an E/M service. CMS is expected to release its final rule on the MPFS in November.

## Action Requested

### Make Your Voice Heard with I-GO

During the August Congressional recess, AAO-HNS members met with Federal lawmakers in their home states/districts as part of the Academy's In-district Grassroots Outreach (I-GO) program. AAO-HNS President-elect **Albert L. Merati, MD**, met with U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) in Seattle, WA; **Scott R. Schoem, MD**, met with the office of U.S. Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) in Hartford, CT; and **Richard M. Rosenfeld, MD, MPH, MBA**, met with U.S. Representative Yvette Clarke (D-NY) in Brooklyn, NY. Please contact [govtaffairs@entnet.org](mailto:govtaffairs@entnet.org) to learn more about the I-GO program or to request assistance in scheduling your meetings.

### Advocate or Abdicate!

Congress is back in session, and September is the perfect time to regroup and strengthen the Academy's various advocacy programs. Help the AAO-HNS prepare for a busy fall by signing up for [PROJECT 535](#), donate to [ENT PAC](#),\* join the [ENT Advocacy Network](#), and/or volunteer to be a [State Tracker](#)! Contact [govtaffairs@entnet.org](mailto:govtaffairs@entnet.org) with questions or to learn more.

### Last Chance to Have Your Name Listed on the ENT PAC Wall of Donors

Have you made your 2018 contribution to ENT PAC? If not, you have until **September 14** to donate and still be included on the ENT PAC Wall of Donors at the AAO-HNSF 2018 Annual Meeting & OTO Experience. To make an online contribution, use your AAO-HNS member log-in to access [www.entpac.org](http://www.entpac.org), then click "Donate."

### AAO-HNS President Advocates for the Specialty



AAO-HNS President **Gavin Setzen, MD**, attended a political event on behalf of [ENT PAC](#) for U.S. Representative Paul Tonko (D-NY) in Albany, NY. Congressman Tonko serves on the U.S. House Committee on Energy & Commerce, a key Committee with jurisdiction over healthcare issues that impact the specialty. The Academy's presence at these events is crucial to ensuring the Academy's voice is heard on Capitol Hill.

### U.S. House Committee Examines Regulatory Burden on Providers in Medicare

The U.S. House Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Health [released a report](#) discussing findings and potential next steps to reduce some of the burdensome regulations providers face as part of the Medicare program. The report is the latest development from the Committee's ongoing "Medicare Red Tape Relief Project" examining the excessive regulatory burden placed on providers.

### AAO-HNS Joins Coalition Letter on Appropriate Use Criteria

On September 7, the AAO-HNS co-signed a [letter](#) to leaders of the House Ways & Means Committee seeking to reduce unnecessary reporting requirements as a result of the appropriate use criteria (AUC) program. In the letter, the AAO-HNS and other physician organizations urge lawmakers to modify the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014, which established the Medicare AUC Program, to allow healthcare professionals who meet the requirements of the Medicare Quality Payment Program (QPP) to be deemed compliant for AUC purposes.

### Academy Signs Letter Supporting Funding for AHRQ

The AAO-HNS joined 130 stakeholders in sending a [letter](#) to the leaders of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees requesting adequate funding for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) in Fiscal Year 2019. The letter was spearheaded by the Friends of AHRQ.

### AAO-HNS Sponsors Capitol Hill Visit to NIH

The AAO-HNS recently sponsored a [Friends of the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus tour](#) of the NIH's National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD). The event, which included Congressional staff members and representatives from the hearing health community, featured an overview of the NIDCD's intramural research program, followed by tours of labs conducting research on hereditary deafness and cochlear development.

## Other News

### Advocacy in Action: UHC to Cover Hybrid Cochlear Implants

In response to March 2018 comments submitted by the AAO-HNS, United Healthcare (UHC) has [updated its Cochlear Implant medical policy](#). The Academy's review included literature to support the benefits of hybrid cochlear implants and data on the population of patients who benefit from these technologies. Effective August 1, UHC now considers hybrid cochlear implants proven and/or medically necessary in certain circumstances.

Sincerely,

Susan R. Cordes, MD  
BOG Legislative Affairs Committee Chair  
and the AAO-HNS Legislative Advocacy Team

For more information, contact [govtaffairs@entnet.org](mailto:govtaffairs@entnet.org). Don't forget to bookmark [The ENT Advocate!](#)

If you no longer wish to receive important legislative and political updates via *The ENT Advocate*, please reply to this email with CANCEL ADVOCATE in the subject line.

\*Contributions to ENT PAC are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Contributions are voluntary, and all members of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery have the right to refuse to contribute without reprisal. Federal law prohibits ENT PAC from accepting contributions from foreign nationals. By law, if your contributions are made using a personal check or credit card, ENT PAC may use your contribution only to support candidates in federal elections. All corporate contributions to ENT PAC will be used for educational and administrative fees of ENT PAC, and other activities permissible under federal law. Federal law requires ENT PAC to use its best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation, and the name of the employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year.

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