



Dear ENT Advocacy Network Member:

June 1, 2022

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

Sign Up Now: Alliance of Specialty Medicine Virtual Advocacy Day, June 8

The Alliance of Specialty Medicine (“The Alliance”) is a nonpartisan coalition comprised of a diverse group of medical societies, including the AAO-HNS, dedicated to advocating on behalf of specialty physicians. On Wednesday, June 8, the Alliance is hosting a virtual Advocacy Day with Members of Congress and their staff. Members of the ENT Advocacy Network are strongly encouraged to participate. Sign up today to take advantage of this unique opportunity to engage with the nation’s leading healthcare policymakers and advocate for the issues impacting otolaryngologist-head and neck surgeons and specialty physicians.

To participate in the Alliance’s virtual Advocacy Day, please email Thomas Radder at tradder@entnet.org, by June 2.

Federal Legislative and Political Reports

AAO-HNS Endorses AMA Medicare Payment System Principles

In partnership with the American Medical Association (AMA) and numerous national and state medical societies, the AAO-HNS endorsed a [set of principles](#) that outline characteristics of a rational Medicare payment system. For decades, the current payment system has been woefully underfunded, failing to recognize increases in practice costs and threatening Medicare beneficiaries’ access to care. These core principles will guide the Academy’s advocacy efforts on Medicare physician payment reform, representing the next stage in the house of medicine’s efforts to develop common sense, long-term changes to Medicare physician reimbursement.

ENT PAC Update

ENT PAC, the non-partisan, issue-driven political action committee of the AAO-HNS, is the only political action committee solely focused on the federal legislative priorities of otolaryngologist-head and neck surgeons. ENT PAC is an invaluable tool that strengthens the Academy’s overall legislative advocacy efforts and provides a strong collective voice for the specialty on Capitol Hill.

During the month of May, AAO-HNS Advocacy staff attended political events supporting the lead sponsors of legislation to reform the prior authorization process in the Medicare Advantage program. Staff also attended events for members of the Senate Finance Committee, members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, and members of the House Committee on Ways and Means, three congressional committees with jurisdiction over federal health policy. If you are interested in learning more about ENT PAC or investing in the future of the specialty, [please click here!](#)

Prior Authorization Reform Bill Gains Momentum on Capitol Hill

On May 24, the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act (H.R. 3173) reached 296 bipartisan cosponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives. H.R. 3173, which would streamline and reform the prior authorization process in the Medicare Advantage program, is now eligible to be considered on the House floor sometime in July of this year. Academy Advocacy staff have been actively engaged with committee leadership to advance this legislation and will continue working to get this critical legislation passed into law this Congress.

AAO-HNS Joins Campaign Supporting FDA Plan to Ban Sale of Menthol-Flavored Cigarettes

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently released a proposed rule that would prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars, a policy change that the AAO-HNS has long supported. The AAO-HNS joined a coalition, spearheaded by the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, running print ads supporting the proposed rule and educating the public on the dangers of menthol tobacco products.

State Legislative Reports

AAO-HNS Responds to Physician Assistant Challenge in New York

On May 19, 2022, the Academy sent a [letter of opposition](#) to the members of the NY Senate Higher Education Committee, regarding S. 9233. This proposed legislation would allow physician assistants (PAs) to perform medical services without the supervision of a physician. The AAO-HNS noted that PAs receive limited education and training (approximately 26 months) in comparison to physicians and are not trained to provide independent care. As such, the letter urged the Senate Committee to support patient-centered, team-based healthcare supervised by a physician.

Regulatory Reports

CMS Reweighting 2021 MIPS Cost Performance Category

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on clinicians, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is reweighting the [Merit-based Incentive Payment System](#) (MIPS) cost performance category to 0% for the 2021 performance period. The cost performance category weight (20%) will be redistributed to other performance categories regardless of whether the clinician is participating as an individual, group, or virtual group. As the cost performance category relies on administrative claims data, no action is required by clinicians.

Academy Urges CMS to Work with Physicians to Review Appropriate Use Criteria Program

The Academy joined the AMA and 42 other medical societies and associations [to urge CMS](#) to work closely with physicians and stakeholders as it prepares a report to Congress about the Appropriate Use Criteria (AUC) Program. The May 18 letter recognized the potential utility of appropriate use criteria but called for a thoughtful re-examination of the AUC program. To allow ample time to review and re-evaluate the program, the organizations requested a further delay to the penalty phase of the program, which is currently slated to begin on the later of January 1, 2023, or the January 1 that follows the declared end of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

AMA Releases CPT Code Update for COVID-19 Booster Candidates

In preparation for potential FDA authorization, the AMA has [announced](#) newly assigned provisional CPT codes for COVID-19 booster candidates from Pfizer and Sanofi-GlaxoSmithKline. The Pfizer booster candidate is proposed for use in children ages 5 to 11 who have completed a COVID-19 vaccine primary series, while the Sanofi-GSK booster candidate is proposed for use in persons age 18 and older who have completed a COVID-

19 vaccine primary series. The use of each code is conditional on the assigned booster candidate receiving Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA.

Action Requested

New Volunteers Needed to Strengthen PROJECT 535

Successful legislative advocacy starts with a solid grassroots foundation. Given Congressional focus on legislation addressing health policy and physician reimbursement in the 117th Congress, it's now more important than ever for the Academy to strengthen its key contacts network via PROJECT 535. In addition to the Academy's overall advocacy efforts, PROJECT 535 volunteers help reinforce our message by establishing personal relationships with federal elected officials. Federal lawmakers want to hear from YOU—their physician constituents! The commitment is minimal, but the impact is immense. To help further strengthen our collective advocacy efforts contact govtaffairs@entnet.org for more information.

Sincerely,

Yolanda L. Troublefield, MD, JD
BOG Legislative Affairs Committee Chair
and the AAO-HNS Advocacy Team

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.

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

*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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