



**Governors' Committee**

**on Socioeconomic Issues:**

**An update**

**by Michael C. Dalsing, MD, FACS**

**T**he Socioeconomic Issues Committee is a committee within the Board of Governors' structure with a broad base of surgeons in private and academic practices. This diverse and large group (the committee is composed of more than 40 members) provides optimal insight and active discussion on relevant socioeconomic topics.

The committee is currently focused on providing feedback to the Executive Committee regarding the desirability of a joint Board of Governors/Board of Regents meeting in 2009, which was overwhelmingly supported by both Boards, as well as providing suggestions on an appropriate topic for the meeting.

Our committee supports discussion of workforce issues, a comprehensive topic that might realistically address some of the following issues: ensuring the survival of the general surgeon; exploring the differences between rural and urban practice; incorporating the foreign surgeon; deciding what is "core surgery" and what can be

delegated to physician extenders; and investigating issues related to the employed physician, physician privileging, work hours, and resident training.

In addition, each year the Socioeconomics Issues Committee manages the process of reviewing and selecting the American College of Surgeons/Pfizer Humanitarian and Surgical Volunteerism Award winners. The current nomination process has been completed, with 14 individuals nominated for the Humanitarian Award and 21 for the various volunteerism awards. Review and selection of the nominees is currently under way. As always, the caliber of the nominated individuals is outstanding and the selection process will be a challenging task for the reviewers. The award winners will be featured at the College's Clinical Congress in October in Chicago, IL, in a three-hour panel session entitled Humanitarian Surgical Outreach at Home and Abroad: Reports of the 2009 ACS/Pfizer Volunteerism and Humanitarian Award Winners, which is cosponsored by Opera-

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tion Giving Back and the Socioeconomics Issues Committee.

The committee has a panel session scheduled for the Clinical Congress. The committee is very excited to have recruited five excellent

panelists who will each present a seven-minute presentation discussing a question relevant to their area of expertise, with comments from the other panelists to highlight their perspective on that question. In this panel presentation, William D. Petasnick, FACHE, current chair of the American Hospital Association board of trustees, will consider how the surgeon affects the financial health of the hospital; Richard Dean, MD, FACS, past-president and chief executive officer of Wake Forest University Health Sciences, will discuss joint ventures; O. William Brown, MD, JD, FACS, will focus on the employed surgeon; Mary H. McGrath, MD, MPH, FACS, a Past First-Vice-President, will consider the management of accreditation and regulations; and Sanjay R. Parikh, MD, FACS, will round out the panel by providing insight from the perspective of the "young surgeon." There will be 20 to 30 minutes for audience participation at the conclusion of the formal presentations. The committee is excited about the pertinent topics this panel is presenting and committee members hope that a large and involved audience will make the educational process even more robust.

This year, the committee has determined two topics that are of considerable interest to our members and to the ACS membership in general. We believe that a statement from the ACS Board of Governors is required to clarify the difference between drug use and the use of devices. Regulatory agencies require that a company train treating physicians on the proper use of

*continued on page 47*

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## COMMITTEE ON SOCIOECONOMIC ISSUES, from page 25

their devices, yet they restrict the educational interaction between industry representatives and the physician. If this statement is generated in conjunction with other interested organizations, this effort may be a joint statement of clarification from the perspective of the College. Currently, this initiative is in the design stage. The second topic of concern is related to the need to retain advancing levels of independence during surgical training, which is becoming ever more difficult in the current environment of external controls. A statement from the College may allow a more reasonable and understandable approach to how we train our future surgeons. It is hoped that this statement might influence our educational process.

For next year's Clinical Congress in Washington, DC, the Socioeconomic Issues Committee will again schedule a panel session. The potential topics under consideration for next year's Congress include the following: The Surgeon's Interaction

with Industry; The Implications of an Employed Surgeon; Where the Business of Medicine Meets the Profession; Expectations of Surgeons Finishing Training; and Surgical Training: Current Challenges and Whose Responsibility. Discussion is ongoing as to which topic is most pertinent for the following year, and which would contribute most to the members' needs and concerns.

Future considerations for the Socioeconomic Issues Committee encompass the scope of the surgeon's world, and topics abound. The challenge is focusing on the issues that we can most have an effect on within our committee structure. The economy is likely to have an impact on what topics will be of the greatest concern to the membership. The Socioeconomic Issues Committee is open to the concerns of all members and would like feedback from surgeons who believe that an issue is going unrecognized. The committee would like to provide a voice for the surgeon experiencing challenges pertinent to the charge of this group. [Q]