
Report on the 2009 AMA HOD meeting

by Jon H. Sutton, Manager of State Affairs, Division of Advocacy and Health Policy

Delegates expecting a robust discussion of health system reform were not disappointed at the American Medical Association (AMA) annual House of Delegates (HOD) meeting in Chicago, IL. Contributing to that debate was a one-hour address by President Barack Obama, who made his case for reform to the HOD during the June 2009 meeting. He was warmly greeted by those in the crowd, and while many were not in complete agreement with some of the president's proposals, delegates felt he candidly presented his views on the issues requiring attention.

After almost nine years of service as a delegate, Charles Logan, MD, FACS, retired from the ACS Delegation. He engaged fully in AMA HOD activities on behalf of the College, including his role as reference committee chair during tena-

cious pay-for-performance debates, where he demonstrated plain-spoken and stalwart support for the College's agenda.

Issue highlights

Highlights of the HOD meeting included the following:

- *Resolution 110—Public Option Health Insurance.* Sponsored by more than 15 state medical societies, Resolution 110 would originally have directed the AMA to oppose public option proposals that could result in the elimination of the private health insurance market. After long and robust debate on the matter, the HOD finally adopted a resolution that outlines the AMA support of health system reform alternatives that are consistent with AMA principles of pluralism, freedom of choice, freedom of practice, and universal access for patients.

- *Resolution 203—Right to Privately Contract.* An emotional issue for many delegates, Resolution 203 would have made the right to privately contract the highest advocacy priority of the AMA. After considerable testimony, the resolution was amended and adopted to direct the AMA to include in its top advocacy priorities the enactment of federal legislation that ensures and protects the fundamental right of patients to privately contract with physicians, without penalties for doing so, and regardless of the payer within the framework of free market principles.

- *CMS Report 8—Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH).* The AMA Council on Medical Service presented a report on the patient-centered medical home. Most significantly, the recommendations in this report reinforced the notion that payments associated with the PCMH model not be subject to a budget neutrality offset in the Medicare physician payment schedule. This is consistent with the position taken by the physician specialty community as it advocates in favor of health system reform.

- *Financial relationships with industry in continuing medical education (CME).* The issue of industry financial support for CME has, over the past couple of years, achieved a high

June 2009 ACS Delegation to the AMA HOD

Richard B. Reiling, MD, FACS, Delegation Chair
John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS, Delegate
Carlo A. Dall'Olmo, MD, FACS, Delegate
Charles W. Logan, MD, FACS, Delegate
Chad A. Rubin, MD, FACS, Delegate
Sanjay R. Parikh, MD, FACS, Young Physician Section (YPS) Delegate
Jacob Moalem, MD, YPS Delegate
Patricia L. Turner, MD, FACS, YPS Liaison
Hannah Zimmerman, MD, Resident and Fellow Section (RFS) Delegate
Christian Shults, MD, RFS Sectional Delegate

level of scrutiny, and as a result the AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs developed a report (CEJA Report 1) in 2008 that was referred back for further work. During the discussion of the June 2009 report, the council was complimented for presenting a much-improved report to the HOD. However, significant concerns still exist, particularly the definitions of *ethically preferable* and *ethically permissible*. As such, the CEJA Report 1 was referred back for further consideration.

Surgical Caucus of the AMA

The Surgical Caucus of the AMA, which met during the HOD meeting, continues to operate smoothly under the management of the College. This meeting's educational session—Health Care Reform and the Surgeon—was presented by Thomas Russell, MD, FACS,

ACS Executive Director, and Kristen V. Hedstrom, Assistant Director of Legislative Affairs in the College's Division of Advocacy and Health Policy.

Elections

As reported in the June 2009 issue of the *Bulletin* (page 55), Richard Reiling, MD, FACS, ran for re-election to the AMA Council on Medical Education. A well-coordinated campaign managed by John Armstrong, MD, FACS, and the support of numerous surgical specialty societies and delegates helped Dr. Reiling achieve re-election in the first round of voting.

A number of Fellows ran for election to AMA positions. Barney Maynard, MD, FACS, a urologist from Indiana, ran for the AMA Board of Trustees, but, in a tough multi-candidate race, was not successful. Raj Ambay, MD, a plastic surgeon from Wisconsin, was success-

ful in his election bid to be the Resident Trustee on the AMA Board of Trustees, and Michael Deren, MD, FACS, of Connecticut, was re-elected to the AMA Council on Constitution and Bylaws.

In other election news, several surgeons were successful in races for the Young Physician Section (YPS) Governing Council. Patricia Turner, MD, FACS, was elected to serve as Speaker of the YPS Assembly; Steven Chen, MD, FACS, was elected to be the Assembly's Alternate Delegate to the HOD; Ravi Goel, MD, an ophthalmologist from New Jersey, was elected Chair-Elect; and Dawn Buckingham, MD, FACS, assumed the Chair position.

For further information on the annual 2009 AMA HOD and surgical involvement in this meeting, contact jsutton@facs.org.
