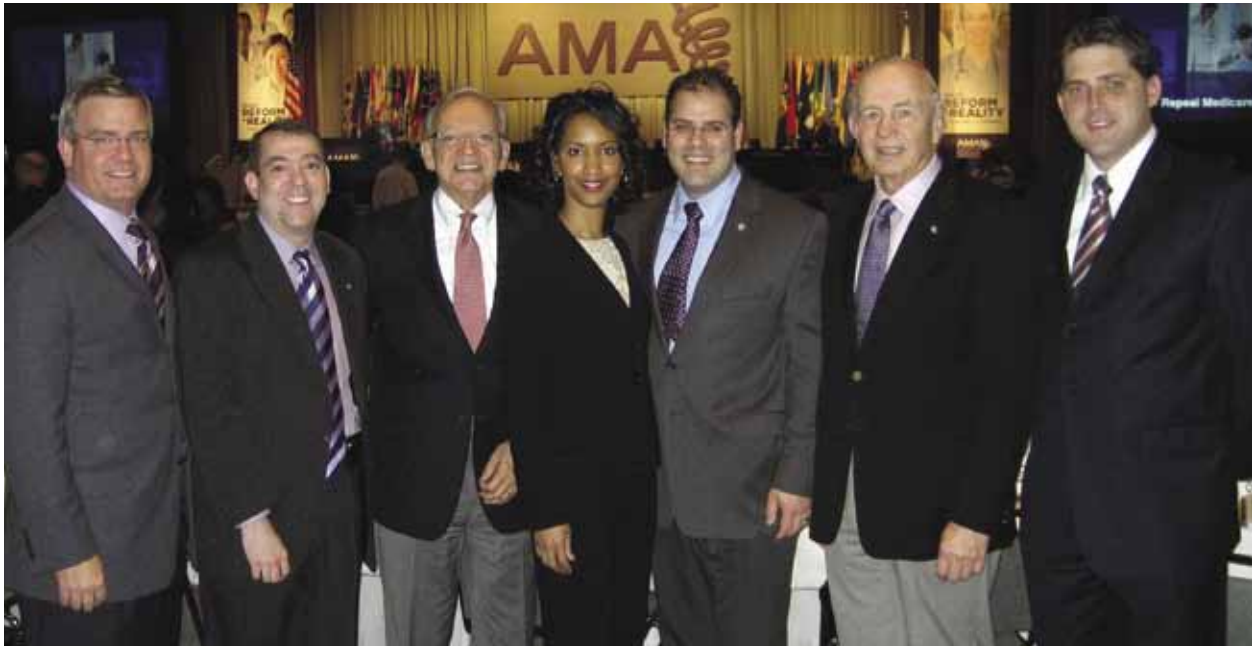

Issues and policies addressed at the AMA Interim HOD meeting

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Members of the ACS delegation gathered at the AMA HOD meeting in November. Left to right: Drs. Armstrong, Rubin, Dall’Olmo, Turner, Moalem, Reiling, and Shults. Not pictured: Dr. Zimmerman and Dr. Parikh.

The American Medical Association (AMA) Interim House of Delegates (HOD) meeting was held November 7–10, 2009, in Houston, TX. “Climate change” came early to the meeting, as passions were aroused by passage of H.R. 3962, the House of Representatives reform bill. In the ensuing debate regarding the AMA health system reform policy, the College’s delegation effectively articulated the ACS’ positions, including support for H.R. 3961 (the Sustainable

Growth Rate fix), and concerns with the Senate version of reform.

By a 2-1 margin, the AMA HOD affirmed support for H.R. 3962 as a legislative vehicle for health system reform, and declined opposition to the public option. Further, AMA policy was amended to include the following seven critical health system reform components:

- Health insurance coverage for all Americans
- Insurance market reforms that expand the choice

of affordable coverage and eliminate denials for both pre-existing conditions or arbitrary caps

- Assurance that health care decisions will remain in the hands of patients and their physicians, and not with insurance companies or government officials

- Investments and incentives for quality improvement and prevention, and wellness initiatives

- Repeal of the Medicare physician payment formula

that triggers steep cuts and threaten seniors' access to care

- Implementation of medical liability reforms to reduce the cost of defensive medicine
- Streamline and standardize insurance claims processing requirements to eliminate unnecessary costs and administrative burdens

Issue highlights

Highlights of the HOD meeting included the following:

- *Funding to support training of the health care workforce.* Originally a request to oppose the expansion of graduate medical education funding to nonmedical doctor/doctor of osteopathy "residency" programs, this item was clarified to state that any new funding to support graduate medical education (GME) positions be available only to Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and/or American Osteopathic Association (AOA)-accredited residency programs. It also emphasized that funding for the training of nonphysician health care providers should not be made at the expense of ACGME and/or AOA accredited residency programs.

- *Definition of physician/use of the term "doctor."* A recent action by The Joint Commission (TJC) to revise the definition of "physician" in its glossary (incorporating Medicare's definition, which includes non-MDs/DOs) raised the ire of many delegates. The HOD adopted a clear policy to indicate that a physician is a "doctor of medicine or osteopathy," and to support

AMA efforts to work with TJC and others to implement this definition. It also strongly agreed to support current AMA Scope of Practice Partnership initiatives to pass truth-in-advertising legislation in the states. The College is a member of the Scope of Practice Partnership Steering Committee.

- *Financial relationships with industry in continuing medical education (CME).* The AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs brought back, for a third time, proposed ethical guidance for both physicians and the profession, with respect to industry support for CME. Not unexpectedly, the HOD sent it back for further revisions, citing concerns that the guidance proposal did not adequately take into account existing guidelines or give sufficient thought to the likely impact of the recommendations on smaller CME providers.

Surgical Caucus of the AMA

The Surgical Caucus of the AMA remains an active and independent voice in the surgical and affiliated specialty community of the HOD. During the meeting, a robust review of HOD resolutions and reports resulted in clear positions on issues of greatest concern to surgeons, anesthesiologists, and emergency physicians. In addition, the caucus sponsored an educational session entitled Surgical/Anesthesia Patient Safety and Error Reduction.

Elections

During the business meeting of the Surgical Caucus, elections were held, with the

following results:

- Chair: William Huffaker, MD, FACS (second term—plastic surgery)
- Chair-elect: Charles Drueck III, MD, FACS (second term—general surgery)
- Secretary: Michael Simon, MD (second term—anesthesiology)
- Treasurer: Michael Deren, MD, FACS (second term—cardiothoracic surgery)
- Member-At-Large: David Gerkin, MD (three-year term—ophthalmology)

Finally, the current ACS delegation should be recognized for their hard work and commitment to participating in the HOD: John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS, Delegation Chair, Gainesville, FL; Carlo Dall'Olmo, MD, FACS, Flint, MI; Sanjay Parikh, MD, FACS, Bronx, NY; Richard Reiling, MD, FACS, Charlotte, NC; Chad Rubin, MD, FACS, Columbia, SC; Patricia Turner, MD, FACS, Baltimore, MD; Jacob Moalem, MD, FACS, YPS Delegate, Rochester, NY; Christian Shults, MD, RFS Sectional Delegate, Arlington, VA; and Hannah Zimmerman, MD, RFS delegate, Tucson, AZ.

For more information on AMA House of Delegates actions, visit the AMA Web site at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/meeting/index.shtml>.