
ACS Health Policy Advisory Council aims to empower Fellows as advocates

by Charles D. Mabry, MD, FACS, and Catharine Harris

The decisions our federal and state legislators make—or fail to make—have an extraordinary impact on our ability to care for our surgical patients. Although many surgeons consider these political decisions to be out of their control, the advocacy efforts of individual surgical professionals, aided by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Division of Advocacy and Health Policy staff can, in fact, help to influence and shape the decisions made on Capitol Hill. Surgeons who want to make a difference for their patients must get involved in the legislative and political process and become surgeon advocates.

With that goal in mind, the ACS

Board of Regents authorized the creation of the Health Policy Advisory Council (HPAC)—a subcommittee of the Health Policy and Advocacy Group (HPAG)—to support the College’s position on legislative and regulatory efforts. The Regents want to encourage improved two-way communication between the Fellows and the College, so that the Fellows will have up-to-date information on important legislative and regulatory matters and can then communicate back to the ACS how those issues would affect their patients and practices.

Composed of a Chair and Vice-Chair, a 10-member Regional Coordinating Committee, and one

or two At-Large Counselors from each College chapter, the HPAC is designed to serve as a member-representative body that aims to increase participation in advocacy by Fellows of the College and improve the organization’s clout on Capitol Hill. The specific goals of the HPAC include the following:

- Facilitating a two-way communication pathway between Counselors and Fellowship at-large through the dissemination, collection, synthesis, and provision of feedback on advocacy and health policy issues to the HPAG

- Increasing surgeons’ voices on Capitol Hill by fostering an extensive grassroots advocacy network

- Providing a platform and structure for the College to mentor and develop future members of other health care committees by developing expertise on regulatory and legislative issues

Members of the HPAC are a diverse group, consisting of Regents, Governors, young surgeons and residents, Health Policy Scholars, and other College members with expressed interest or expertise in health care policy. Special efforts are made to ensure that all specialties have representation on the HPAC.

The HPAC is scheduled to have two face-to-face meetings annually: one in the fall at the Clinical Congress, and one in the spring at the ACS Advocacy Summit. These meetings will be supplemented with regular webinars and teleconferences throughout the year.

Health Policy Advisory Group Regional Coordinating Committee

Charles D. Mabry, MD, FACS, Chair

Howard Snyder, MD, FACS, Vice-Chair

Ronald Gross, MD, FACS, Region 1 Chief (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont)

Charles Coren, MD, FACS, Region 2 Chief (New York and New Jersey)

Leonard Weireter, MD, FACS, Region 3 Chief (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia)

John Theodore Perry, MD, FACS, Region 4 Chief (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands)

To be determined, Region 5 Chief (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin)

Daniel Frey, MD, FACS, Region 6 Chief (Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Texas)

James Gigantelli, MD, FACS, Region 7 Chief (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma)

Sara Hartsaw, MD, FACS, Region 8 Chief (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming)

Albert Kwan, MD, FACS, Region 9 Chief (Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and California)

John Mayberry, MD, FACS, Region 10 Chief (Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington)

Though still in its early stages, members of the HPAC Regional Coordinating Committee met for the first time at the 97th Annual Clinical Congress in October 2011, in San Francisco, CA. The following individuals participated in that meeting (all MD, FACS): Charles D. Mabry, Chair (co-author of this article); Howard Snyder, Vice-Chair; Ronald Gross; Charles Coren; Leonard Weireter; Daniel Frey; James Gigantelli; Sara Hartsaw; Albert Kwan; and John Mayberry.

In a similar structure to the ACS Committee on Trauma, each Region Chief is assigned specific states for which they oversee the Counselors (see figure, page 48). Counselors, who comprise the core membership of the HPAC, will complete a variety of district-based activities, each with the aim of helping to build

personal relationships between surgeon advocates and their elected officials. These activities will include delivering legislative updates to their state chapter, distributing grassroots Action Alerts to Fellows within their chapter and inspiring maximum participation, conducting targeted recruitment efforts for key districts within the chapter on an as-needed basis, attending and promoting the College's annual Advocacy Summit, and showing a commitment to the American College of Surgeons Professional Association Political Action Committee (ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC) by making an annual contribution and attending local political events as a representative of the ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC.

Fellows of the College should anticipate regular updates from their representatives on both the

Regional Coordinating Committee and their HPAC counselor.

HPAC Counselors-At-Large will be appointed throughout 2012. Any member of the College who would like to be considered for the position of a HPAC counselor should contact Catharine Harris in the Division of Advocacy and Health Policy at charris@facs.org or 202-337-2701.

Dr. Mabry is a general surgeon in private practice, and an associate professor of surgery at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock. A former Regent of the College, Dr. Mabry is the chairman of the Health Policy Advisory Council, and serves on the General Surgery Coding and Reimbursement Committee and Health Policy and Advocacy Group of the ACS.

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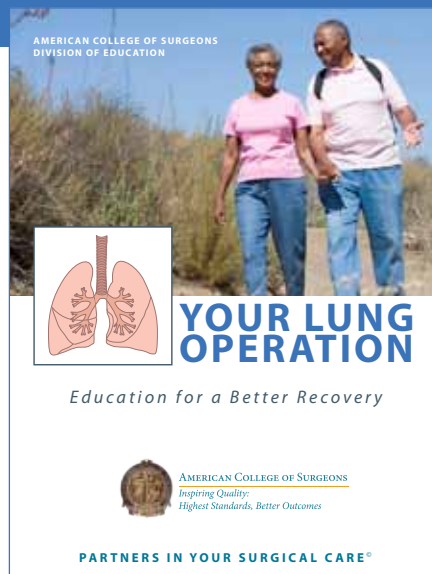
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