



# ARIZONA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF CARDIOLOGY GOVERNOR'S NEWSLETTER

August 13, 1998

## A Letter to the Membership by Thomas F. Ross, M.D.

As the end of summer nears I would like to touch base with you about several issues which have occurred either on a national or local level since my last newsletter.

### **Chapter Activities**

#### *Election results*

Toward the end of this newsletter is a list of the chapter's officers and councilors and their terms. I would personally like to thank those out-going councilors as well as those members who allowed their names to be put into nomination.

#### *Chapter Donations*

The chapter continues to donate some of its funds to the Halle Heart Center of the American Heart Association and the University of Arizona for cardiovascular research. This is our second year of donations in a five-year grant period.

#### *Task Force on Electrophysiology*

During the past year, the Electrophysiology Task Force has met on several occasions and discussed an array of issues pertinent to electrophysiologists. They recently reached a consensus regarding prophylactic antibiotic administration in the implementation or replacement of defibrillators.

#### *Task Force on Pediatric Cardiology*

This task force is being created to examine concerns raised regarding the care of older teenagers and adults who have been forced by insurance and/or managed care plans to be treated by cardiologists who may not have expertise in the treatment of complex congenital heart disease. A group of pediatric and adult cardiologists will hopefully meet and begin to develop guidelines for the appropriate care of patients with complex congenital heart disease.

#### *Chapter Web Page*

The ACC has provided chapters with the ability to establish their own web page. During the Board of Councilor's meeting there was discussion regarding member interest and participation. Enclosed is a brief questionnaire whose results will be discussed at the Board of Councilor's fall meeting.

#### *Chapter Participation*

There continues to be a lack of interest by chapter members. Although this is certainly understandable given our current medical-legal climate, our bylaws do require certain activities to be performed. The scope of our annual business meetings has been drastically reduced given poor attendance. The chapter's last attempt at a major meeting was several years ago in Tucson where the fea-

tured speaker was Gail Wilensky. Despite her national reputation and the expense of sponsoring her as well as dinner, golf, and tennis at a major resort, only 15 to 20 of our members out of 300 attended, and most of these were members of the Board of Councilors.

The Nominating Committee has encountered considerable difficulty in soliciting enough nominations in each geographic area to run for various positions in the organization. Our bylaws mandate that at least two nominations must be made for every elected position.

The Board of Councilors routinely discusses the lack of participation and the long-term future of the chapter at each of its meetings. At this point, they continue to feel that the chapter should exist but limit its statewide activities until there is greater interest in participation by you, the members.

To provide some perspective regarding our membership, within Arizona there are over 300 members of the national ACC organization. Approximately 85% belong to the state chapter by virtue of paying chapter dues. Our typical response to questionnaires or meeting participation is in the 15 to 20 range out of more than 300 chapter members. Interestingly, in the discussions with larger chapters such

as California, their percentage of membership participation is also relatively low, but because of their much larger total membership they appear to have a greater absolute number of active members to contribute to chapter functions. We suffer from a low percentage of participation combined with being a relatively small state with a limited number of members.

### Other Items

#### *E&M Guidelines*

As every one should know, the proposed changes to the E&M coding schemes were abandoned and the AMA, with the ACC and other national organization input, is considering alternatives. Preliminary reports suggest that a blend of the old and new proposed guidelines may emerge over the next few months and be implemented within a year.

#### *Practice Expense Update*

*The ACC has requested that all members comment to HCFA regarding [the proposed guidelines] by September 3<sup>rd</sup>.*

This continues to be an

ongoing problem, and certain areas of cardiology may suffer drastic cutbacks in reimbursement under proposed guidelines. The ACC has requested that all members comment to HCFA regarding this matter by September 3<sup>rd</sup>. You should have recently received details about this issue from the ACC.

#### *ACC Medicare Internet Communication Link*

The ACC has recently established an Internet communication link among the members of the Board

of Governors. The purpose of this is to allow rapid dissemination of Medicare-related issues and information on how these problems are handled in various areas of the country. Several issues, which have been reported, may be of interest to chapter members. They are as follows:

#### □ EKG Reimbursement

Medicare has stated that it will pay for only one interpretation per EKG and that often treating physicians or emergency room physicians are submitting a bill for their interpretation of an EKG on hospital-based patients. This has caused considerable problems with those physicians, usually cardiologists, who have a contract with the hospital to provide official EKG interpretations. The consensus of the discussion appears to be that each hospital is responsible for a strict definition of its various contracts for interpretation and privileging of various procedures, including EKGs.

#### □ Nuclear Medicine

There continues to be sporadic reports of insurers negotiating the exclusive contracts with radiologists for provision of nuclear cardiology services. The College has published recommendations in the past regarding the clinical skills necessary to interpret these types of studies.

#### □ Fraud and Abuse

We are still hearing of surprise inspections by the OIG (Office of Inspector General) regarding potential fraud and abuse. Recently a Wisconsin ACC member was visited by such an agent without advance warning and questioned re-

garding the issue of appropriate supervision of the nuclear medicine services that he provides. As you are aware, there were proposed changes to requirements for supervision of diagnostic tests, but these were not rescinded, merely put on hold. It is anticipated that HCFA will announce their revised regulations in the near future

#### □ Viagra™

The ACC released a summary statement regarding the use of Viagra™ in patients of clinical risk from cardiovascular effects. The full joint statement will be published in early 1999 after the Board of Trustees has approved it, but because of numerous questions regarding this issue, they have released the Executive Summary Statement. This is available through the ACC web site or the Heart House at 800-253-4636 ext. 694.

### Officers and Board of Councilors

Thomas Ross, M.D. - President - 1996-99  
Samuel M. Butman, M.D. - Past Pres. - 1996-99  
Karl B. Kern, M.D. - President Elect - 1998-99  
Peter C. Maki, M.D. - Secretary/Treasurer - 1998-00  
Board of Councilors - Greater Phoenix  
Rebecca A. Allison, M.D. - 1998-01  
George E. Bandy, M.D. - 1997-00  
Charles R. Breed, M.D. - 1998-01  
Carman H. Brooks, M.D. - 1997-00  
Neal A. Klein, M.D. - 1997-00  
Michael E. O'Meara, M.D. - 1998-01  
Board of Councilors - Tucson  
Mark C. Goldberg, M.D. - 1997-00  
Laryenth D. Lancaster, M.D. - 1998-01  
Param P. Sharma, M.D. - 1998-01  
Board of Councilors - At Large  
Andrew S. Newton, M.D. - 1997-00  
Board of Councilors - Pediatric  
Peter J. Baron, M.D. - 1998-01  
Board of Councilors - Surgeon  
David W. Campbell, M.D. - 1998-01

---

## Upcoming Meetings

**Coding Workshop in Cardiology.** Wednesday, September 23, 1998 at the Embassy Suites, 1515 N. 44<sup>th</sup> Street, Phoenix. The Arizona Medical Association and the Arizona Chapter of the ACC are sponsoring a day-

long seminar on coding issues and fraud and abuse. Although final recommendations for E&M guidelines will clearly not be available, there will be a review of current interpretations of E&M guidelines as well as other coding and fraud and abuse issues specific to cardiology. Contact Marian Paulson at ArMA for more information: 602-246-8901.

**ACC Governors Meeting.** The next Board of Governors meeting is scheduled for late September and coincides with an annual lobbying effort in Washington, D.C. The Board of Governors agenda has not been released as of this date. During the past several years I have had the opportunity to meet with several of Arizona's congressmen and senators or their representatives and discuss cardiology issues of importance in Arizona. For the most part the Arizona congressional delegation has been supportive, even if not instrumental, in advocating many of our views.

**Annual Arizona Chapter Business Meeting and Board of Councilors Meeting.** The date has yet to be established, but these meetings will coincide and probably occur during the fall months. Items to be discussed include a possible chapter web site and revisions to the bylaws regarding the nomination process for officers and councilors.

---

Please feel free to contact me at 602-258-0227 if there are any questions or comments regarding these or other matters of interest. My e-mail address is [tross@azcard.com](mailto:tross@azcard.com).