

*An E-Newsletter  
from the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians*

**Registration Still Available for the Annual Meeting Nov. 5-8!**

While online registration has closed for the GAFFP 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Scientific Assembly and Exhibition, you can still register onsite at the Cobb Galleria and take advantage of the more than 40 hours of CME available.

Hotel accommodations can still be made at the Sheraton Suites Galleria which is located directly across the street from the event venue. The GAFFP Room rate of \$134 will be honored as long as the hotel has rooms available. For reservations, call 770-955-3900 or 1-888-627-7047.

**2008 AAFP Congress of Delegates Report**

*by John Bucholtz, DO, Senior AAFP Delegate*

There were five reference committees that heard and debated issues at the 2008 AAFP Congress of Delegates that met in San Diego. There were the Reference Committees on Education, Practice Enhancement, Health of the Public and Science, Organization and Finance, and Advocacy.

The Georgia delegation introduced more resolutions than any other Chapter. The following are the resolutions and outcomes:

**1. Reference Committee on Organization and Finance:**

**MILITARY DUES REDUCTION/WAIVER OF CME**

RESOLVED, That the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) provide deployed military AAFP members information on mechanisms for reduction in the annual AAFP dues should they face extreme financial hardship.

This resolution was passed by the Congress of Delegates

**2. Reference Committee on Practice Enhancement**

**MEDICARE ELECTION PERIOD**

RESOLVED, That the American Academy of Family Physicians petition the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to modify the Medicare physician participation agreement to permit physicians to change their Medicare participation status with 90 days notice in between each annual election period.

This resolution was passed by the Congress of Delegates

**3. Reference Committee on Practice Enhancement**

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS (EHR) SYSTEMS**

RESOLVED, That the Department of Health and Human Services be petitioned to provide loans of \$20,000 per physician to support the implementation of an approved Certification Commission on Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT) electronic health record (EHR) system to include, but not limited to, hardware procurement, Internet access, staff training, and conversion of current systems, and be it further

RESOLVED, That loans from the Department of Health and Human Services of \$20,000 per physician to support the implementation of an approved Certification Commission on Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT) electronic health record (EHR) system will be forgiven after 12 months if the practice is operationally integrated and the EHR is functional, and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) petition the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide a significant increase in global payments for care to all physician

practices incorporating a Certification Commission on Healthcare Information Technology (CCHIT) approved electronic health record (EHR) system.

This resolution was referred to the AAFP Board of Directors for review.

#### **4. Reference Committee on Advocacy SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ROBERT GRAHAM CENTER**

RESOLVED, That the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) recognizes the excellence of the Robert Graham Center, and be it further

RESOLVED, That the AAFP Board of Directors report back to the 2009 Congress of Delegates on its plans to provide long-term stable funding for the Robert Graham Center.

This resolution was referred to the AAFP Board of Directors for review.

#### **5. Reference Committee on Advocacy HIPAA EXCLUSIONS**

RESOLVED, That the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), through the Robert Graham Center, study the impact of Title I Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) exclusions have on access and continuity of care for Americans employed in small businesses, and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and Board of Directors provide a report to the 2009 Congress of Delegates on access and continuity of care for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Title I effected individuals.

This resolution was referred to the AAFP Board of Directors for review.

All the proceedings are on the AAFP web site at [www.aafp.org/congress](http://www.aafp.org/congress)

Your delegates and alternates want to thank you for allowing us to represent you. We were quite active in working for you and your patients. We also want to thank Fay Brown, Executive Vice President for her help and visibility in representing Georgia.

#### **2008 Georgia Academy of Family Physicians Congress of Delegates Upcoming Resolutions**

The 2008 GAFFP Congress of Delegates will be held at the Sheraton Suites Galleria in Atlanta starting Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup> and concluding on Sunday, November 9<sup>th</sup>. Testimony will be heard during the Reference Committee Meeting, Saturday from 3:30 – 5:00 pm in the Cumberland Ballroom.

Below are the Resolutions scheduled for discussion and that require a vote. Only delegates can vote on the resolutions; however, as a GAFFP member you are encouraged and welcomed to attend this hearing to give testimony and or discuss the resolutions with your district delegates before voting occurs.

#### **The Reference Committee will hear the following resolutions:**

1. GAFFP Bylaw changes previously printed in the GAFFP June Newsletter.
2. A resolution on displaying the USA flag and reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance” during the Summer and Annual GAFFP meetings.
3. A resolution that would make the GAFFP a vital force in changing public policy to ensure healthcare services for all Georgians.
4. A resolution for universal medical coverage.
5. A resolution on Medicaid and Medicare payments to family physicians.
6. A resolution regulating the type of food that can be purchased through state supported food programs with the aim to improve the health of the citizens of the state and therefore decrease health care expenses to the state.
7. Recommendation from the Task Force on Finances to become a standing committee entitled Committee on Finances.

8. Recommendation from the PAC that the GAFP continue to encourage an increase in annual contributions to the GAFP PAC to meet the resolution passed by the COD in 2007.
9. Recommendation from the Membership Committee to redistrict several of the GAFP districts within the state.

The meeting is open to all GAFP members. For more information, call Jacquelyn Taylor at 404-321-7445.

### **Task Force on Health Policy**

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Early this summer, President, Bruce M. LeClair, MD, MPH, FFAFP formed the Task Force on Health Policy enlisting GAFP leaders to work on the following:

- Define the health policy issues facing Georgia family physicians and their patients
- Review existing health policy reform proposals
- Develop a resource base of proposals Prioritize issues in which the GAFP should become involved in
- Develop action plans or policy statements to support existing proposals
- Develop new proposals for action and review of new proposals as they arise
- Define the role of the GAFP in health policy discussions and reform

The Task Force developed the following actions from their first meeting:

- The Task Force is reviewing all past Board and Congress of Delegates policies.
- Developing a Policy and Procedures Manual to be reviewed by the Bylaws Committee for any necessary bylaws changes.
- The manual will be reviewed annually by the President-Elect and Speaker of the Congress of Delegate.

### **Influenza Sentinel Providers – Contributing to the Public’s Health**

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#### **What is an influenza sentinel provider?**

An influenza sentinel provider conducts surveillance for influenza-like illness (ILI) in collaboration with the local and state health departments as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data reported by sentinel providers, in combination with other influenza surveillance data, provide a picture of influenza virus and ILI activity in the United States. Approximately 2,400 providers throughout the country were enrolled in this network during the 2007-2008 influenza season; 77 of them were Georgia sentinel providers.

#### **What data do sentinel providers collect?**

Sentinel providers report the total number of patient visits each week and the number of patient visits for influenza-like illness by age group (0-4 years, 5-24 years, 25-64 years, >65 years).

#### **How and to whom are data reported?**

These data are transmitted once a week over the Internet or via fax to CDC. Most providers report that it takes them less than 30 minutes a week to compile and report their data. In addition, sentinel providers submit specimens from a subset of patients for virus isolation free of charge three times during the influenza season. The Georgia Public Health Laboratory types the viruses; many of these are then forwarded to CDC for viral characterization.

#### **Who can be an influenza sentinel provider?**

Providers of any specialty (for example, family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, infectious diseases) in any type of practice (private practice, public health clinic, urgent care center, emergency room, university student health center, occupational medicine) are eligible to be sentinel providers.

#### **Why volunteer?**

Influenza viruses are constantly evolving and cause substantial morbidity and mortality (approximately 36,000 deaths) almost every winter. Data from sentinel providers are critical for monitoring the impact of influenza and, in combination with other influenza surveillance data, can be used to guide prevention and control activities, vaccine strain selection and patient care.

Sentinel providers receive feedback on the data submitted, summaries of regional and national influenza data and free subscriptions to CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report and Emerging Infectious Diseases Journal.

The most important consideration is that the data provided are critical for protecting the public's health. For more information on influenza sentinel provider surveillance, please contact **Ariane Reeves, RN, BSN, MPH, CIC – Influenza Surveillance Coordinator for the Georgia Division of Public Health – at 404 -463-4625 or [alreeves@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:alreeves@dhr.state.ga.us)**.

### **Increase in Medicare Payments and Part IV Credit for ABFM Recertification**

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Beginning September 2008, ABFM Diplomates may use the Diabetes Module developed specifically for this purpose by the ABFM to collect and submit data to the Registry on a set of either 30 or 15 consecutive patients with either Type 1 or Type 2 Diabetes. Not all patients in these samples must be Medicare patients, but at least two Medicare Part B beneficiaries must be included in the Diplomate's sample.

For 2008, physicians who meet the criteria for satisfactory submission of quality measures data for 30 consecutive patients will earn an incentive payment of 1.5 percent of their total allowed charges for Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) covered professional services furnished during the reporting period, January 1, 2008 – December 31, 2008 (the 2008 calendar year). Alternatively, those physicians who meet the criteria for satisfactory submission of quality measures data for 15 consecutive patients will earn an incentive payment of 1.5 percent of their total allowed charges for PFS covered professional services furnished during the reporting period, July 1, 2008 – December 31, 2008. CMS approved financial incentives earned for 2008 reporting are scheduled to be paid in mid-2009 from the Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance (Part B) Trust Fund.

This module may be accessed without fee for use in participating in PQRI. However, Diplomates who are participating in MC-FP and elect to complete this module to receive Part IV credit will be required to submit the appropriate MC-FP fee, depending on which payment plan they have chosen. Additional information regarding PQRI and the Diabetes Module can be found on the ABFM website, [www.theabfm.org](http://www.theabfm.org).

### **Georgia Launches HOSA Foundation to Promote Careers in Healthcare**

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Georgia's supply of healthcare workers is in a "critical condition" according to a recent article in the **Atlanta Journal Constitution**. There are severe shortages in nursing, physicians, psychologists, social workers, and other health related fields.

Georgia now ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in total populations and still lags behind its sister states with the number of healthcare professionals. Georgia Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) is a student-lead organizations promoting interest in healthcare occupations among high school and college students. The mission of HOSA is to enhance the delivery of compassionate, quality healthcare by providing opportunities for knowledge, skills and leadership development of all health science technology education students in Georgia, therefore, helping students to meet the needs of the healthcare community.

In its seven year history the Georgia HOSA organization has grown from an initial membership of 300 members to over 6000 members. At the recent GA HOSA State Leadership Conference held in Atlanta over 300 students were eligible to compete at the HOSA National Leadership Conference level.

Georgia HOSA wants to make our students aware of the need for family medicine doctors in our state. Our students are expressing an early interest in pursuing a healthcare career, and with the existing shortage, they need to be exposed to the rewarding field of family medicine. These students who are taking healthcare classes in Georgia high schools and middle schools are a captive and ready audience. These HOSA students may offer the solution to the shortage that exists in family medicine, but we need your assistance in helping them see the positive aspects of pursuing this field of medicine.

#### ***How can you help?***

1. Serving as a judge at a competitive event
2. Serving as a speaker at a state event or at a local school
3. Providing internship or shadowing opportunities
4. Field Trips
5. Setting up an information and/or demonstration booth at a state event

**For more information about the Georgia HOSA Foundation contact:** Phyllis Johnson at the Georgia Department of Education at 404-463-6404 or [PJohnson@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:PJohnson@doe.k12.ga.us) or Allen Seigler, Executive Director of Georgia HOSA at 866-914-5378 or [allenseigler@georgiahosa.org](mailto:allenseigler@georgiahosa.org).

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### **New 'TAP-IN' Organization Hopes to Recruit Physician Volunteers for Free Clinics**

As the number of uninsured reaches 1.7 million in Georgia and 46 million nationwide, the demand for free health clinic services that rely on health care professionals to donate their time rises. These clinics are in great need of primary care physicians, specialists, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, psychiatrists, and social workers.

According to the Georgia Free Clinic Network, 30,000 people were turned away due to insufficient capacity in 2007. That's where a non-profit program called TAP-IN, funded by The American Initiative, aims to play a role.

TAP-IN is reaching out to retired and semi-retired health professionals in Atlanta. The organization, which currently operates in Virginia and North Carolina, chose Atlanta because of the well-established network of free clinics already in place and the concentration of retired health professionals in the greater metropolitan area.

Health professionals can register for the program at [www.tap-in.org](http://www.tap-in.org) or by calling 877-605-3250.

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### **In the News**

**Frank Robinson, MD of Stockbridge**, was recently recognized in the *Henry Herald* and the *Henry Neighbor News Editor* for opening a medical clinic which provides primary care for those individuals who don't have insurance, or are underinsured in Locust Grove.

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### **Of Note**

**Bernard Cohen, MD, MBA of Smyrna**, was recently named Senior Medical Director of WellCare of Georgia.

**Mitch Cook, DO, of Athens**, was appointed as the President of the Coalition of Athens Area Physicians (CAAP).

**Irshad Syed, MD of Marietta**, received the 2008 Pfizer Teacher Development Award. This national award recognizes fifteen outstanding, community-based family physicians who combine clinical practice with part-time teaching of family medicine.

**George T. Fredrick, MD** recently joined the Southwest Georgia Family Medicine Residency as the new Program Director. Dr. Fredrick grew up in Louisville, KY and obtained his medical degree from the University of Kentucky in Lexington, KY. He completed residency at United Hospital Center Family Practice Residency in Clarksburg, WV, where seven years later, he became Program Director. In 2004, he became the Program Director at the Family Medicine Residency at West Virginia University in Morgantown, WV. Dr. Fredrick is set to begin working at Southwest Georgia Family Medicine Residency in Albany, GA on October 31st.