

NEWSLINE

Published monthly for members of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Colleague,

Mark your calendars now !!

The MSDC 1st Annual Gala Dinner-Dance will take place at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel on Saturday evening November 1st. We shall be honoring all of our Past Presidents – and also will be providing all our members and your guests a wonderful opportunity to enjoy a fine evening dinner, dancing and socializing.

It is high time that we have a chance to get together and enjoy one another's company in a delightful and relaxing atmosphere. By the way – that is the night we get an extra hour of sleep back, as we make the switch back to standard time.

More details will be forthcoming – but again, mark your calendars now! Plan on a lovely evening out with your spouse, significant others, dear friends, relatives and your colleagues! Yes, you are encouraged to bring guests along!

Oh – and remember to start brushing up on your dancing if you are out of practice. Our band will be able to play whatever type of music you'd like!

Stay tuned!

Joseph E. Gutierrez, M. D.
President

Save the Date

Medical Society
Gala Dinner Dance

Saturday, November 1, 2008

Mandarin Oriental
Washington, DC

D.C. Council Takes Up the Issue of Health Care Reform in the Healthy DC Act of 2008

Earlier this month, Councilmember David Catania, joined by eight of his Council colleagues, introduced legislation designed to achieve the goal of universal health coverage by 2010. While the District has made great strides in covering more and more individuals through programs such as the DC Alliance, it is estimated that 24,000 District residents remain without health insurance at any given time. The Healthy DC Act seeks to remedy that problem by providing eligible individuals with access to affordable and comprehensive health insurance. "Healthy DC will be the most innovative method of achieving universal health care in the country," said Catania. "We are very close to universal coverage thanks to our generous Medicaid and Alliance programs. Healthy DC is the next step in making sure that our residents have access to comprehensive health care."

If the legislation is adopted by the Council, the District will enter into a contract with CareFirst to implement the program, and beginning on July 1, 2009, all District residents over the age of 18 will be required to maintain continuous health insurance coverage. Those individuals not obtaining coverage will be fined at least \$250.

The legislation also seeks to address the long-standing problem of inadequate Medicaid rates by increasing Medicaid fee-for-service reimbursement rates for specialty and primary care physician services to match Medicare reimbursement rates. "The lack of adequate Medicaid reimbursement rates has created an illusory benefit whereby Medicaid recipients have coverage but can't see a doctor when they need to," said Catania. "Increasing these rates will" *(See DC COUNCIL, p. 8)*

Senator Stabenow Introduces the Save Medicare Act of 2008 (S. 2785) to Stop Medicare Physician Cuts

On March 13, Senator Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., introduced the Save Medicare Act of 2008 (S.2785). This legislation would replace Medicare cuts totaling over 15% with positive physician payment updates from July 1, 2008 through December 31, 2009. Specifically, S. 2785 would extend the 0.5% update through December 31, 2008, averting the 10.6% cut scheduled to occur on July 1, 2008. It would also provide physicians with a 1.8% update for 2009 and extend provisions benefiting rural payment levels. Further, S. 2785 would fund

the Medicare "Physician Quality Reporting Initiative" (PQRI) through 2010, providing participating physicians with an additional 1.5% payment bonus. This temporary fix would inject some stability into the system for seniors and physicians, who would otherwise be forced to make difficult practice decisions as a result of the pending payment cuts. This bill would also give Congress time to work on a long-term solution to the broken payment system without having to take multiple actions over the next 18 months to stop the pending cuts.

Inside

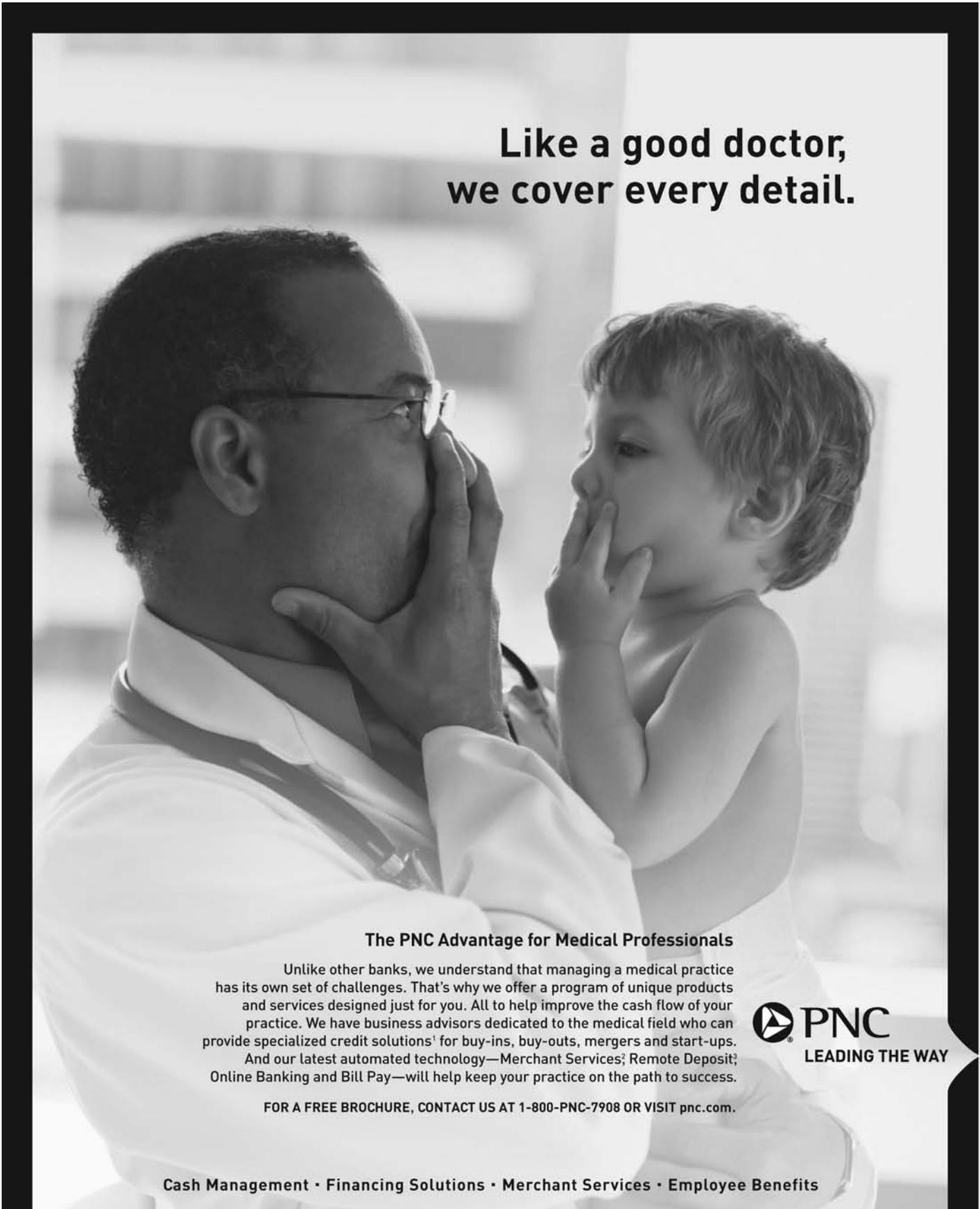
3 Department of Health Seeks Help Combatting STDs

4 MSDC Marketplace

7 DC Medicaid Issues Guidance for Rx Pads

7 Take Me Out to the Ballgame!

8 Tekcolect Puts Dollars in Members' Hands



**Like a good doctor,
we cover every detail.**

The PNC Advantage for Medical Professionals

Unlike other banks, we understand that managing a medical practice has its own set of challenges. That's why we offer a program of unique products and services designed just for you. All to help improve the cash flow of your practice. We have business advisors dedicated to the medical field who can provide specialized credit solutions¹ for buy-ins, buy-outs, mergers and start-ups. And our latest automated technology—Merchant Services²; Remote Deposit³; Online Banking and Bill Pay—will help keep your practice on the path to success.



FOR A FREE BROCHURE, CONTACT US AT 1-800-PNC-7908 OR VISIT pnc.com.

Cash Management • Financing Solutions • Merchant Services • Employee Benefits



1. All loans subject to credit approval. 2. Merchant Services provided by PNC Merchant Services Company and are subject to credit approval. 3. Remote Deposit is subject to credit approval. ©2007 The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. All rights reserved. PNC Bank, Member FDIC

Department of Health Seeks Increased Assistance to Combat Rising STD Rates

Please help the District of Columbia's STD Control Program collect more accurate and complete epidemiological data on patients diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)!

Washington, DC has some of the highest rates of STDs in the United States (US). In 2006, the rate of Chlamydia in Washington, DC was 2 times that of the US (611.8 vs. 347.8 cases per 100,000 population, respectively). The rate of gonorrhea was 3 times that of the country (342.8 vs. 120.9 cases per 100,000 population, respectively). And the rate of primary and secondary syphilis was 7 times that of the US (21.1 vs. 3.3 cases per 100,000 population, respectively).

Because the city's Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) are tasked with interviewing all primary and secondary syphilis cases, the syphilis data is fairly complete. But, in 2007, 43% (2,680/6,193) of Chlamydia cases and 31% (751/2,459) of gonorrhea cases were identified as "unknown" race. Forty six percent

(2,825/6,193) of Chlamydia cases and 34% (828/2,459) of gonorrhea cases were identified as "unknown" ethnicity. And, 21% (1,277/6,193) of Chlamydia cases and 20% (488/2,458) of gonorrhea cases were identified as "unknown" ward.

More complete and accurate epidemi-

ological data will help the STD Control Program better target their intervention strategies and hopefully decrease the city's morbidity. For additional information and questions, please contact B. W. Furness, MD, MPH, CDR, USPHS, STD Control Program (202) 442-4705 phone.

AMA Releases Document to Assist Physicians in Analyzing Medical Practice Integration

The American Medical Association (AMA) Private Sector Advocacy (PSA) unit has developed a new educational resource: *Competing in the marketplace: How physicians can improve quality and increase their value in the health care market through medical practice integration*. This comprehensive antitrust educational resource and advocacy guidance document: (1) provides information to physicians concerning how they may consolidate or financially and clinically integrate

their practices under existing guidance from the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, U.S. Department of Justice and case law and (2) alerts physicians to the flexibility they have under current antitrust laws to lawfully come together to increase their importance and relevance in today's health care market. This resource is available on the PSA Web site at www.ama-assn.org/go/psa under antitrust reform and is available as a printed booklet.

GEICO could save you \$500 a year on car insurance. Wouldn't that help your bottom line?



Special member
discount

MSDC
MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

**MSDC members could receive a special discount on
GEICO car insurance.**

Visit geico.com for your FREE, no obligation rate quote and be sure to select MSDC when asked for your affiliation.

GEICO offers you:

- Outstanding, 24-hour service online or on the phone.
- Fast, fair claim handling.
- Guaranteed claim repairs at GEICO-recommended shops.

To find out how much you could save, visit geico.com or call 1-800-368-2734 today.

GEICO
geico.com

Average savings information based on GEICO New Policyholder Survey data through February 2007.

Discount amount varies in some states. Some discounts, coverages, payment plans, and features are not available in all states or in all GEICO companies. One group discount applicable per policy. Government Employees Insurance Co. • GEICO General Insurance Co. • GEICO Indemnity Co. • GEICO Casualty Co. These companies are subsidiaries of Berkshire Hathaway Inc. GEICO auto insurance is not available in Mass. GEICO, Washington, DC 20076. © 2005-2006 GEICO

MSDC MARKETPLACE

2440 M Street, NW – Medical

Building. I have a newly renovated 3000 square foot office space, configured to share with two additional physicians. My internal medicine boutique practice is state of the art, with electronic medical records/electronic practice management/electronic prescriptions, digital chest x-ray, interpretive EKG, etc. Parking available in the building. Contact Charles J. Bier, M.D., (W) 202-333-7003, (M) 202-498-0731, or e-mail: drbier@bigplanet.com.

For Sale – 2 Foggy Bottom Medical

Condos at 3 Washington Circle, NW. Prime location near GW Hospital and Metro. 3,000 SF at \$1,950,000 (incl. 1 parking sp) and 1,500 SF at \$975,000 (incl. 1 parking sp). Onsite patient parking available. 24 hour security. Contact ML Clark Real Estate at 202-244-8532.

Downtown Premier medical office space in a premier building, 2141 K. St, NW Washington DC. 4000 square foot, new, beautifully decorated office space available for sublet five days a week. Large offices, exam rooms, waiting area. Mini-Ct for sinuses. Beautiful furniture, paintings, fish tank, the works. Reasonable rent. Call 301-718-7979 or fax to 301-718-7747

Uptown Premier medical office space in premier building, the Barlow Building, 5454 Wisconsin Ave, Chevy Chase, Maryland. Brand new 4000 square foot office, turn key. Large offices, including corner office, exam rooms, waiting area. Beautiful furniture, fish tank, paintings, the works. Phone, fax, copy, even nursing support. Reasonable rates. Call 301-718-7979 or fax 301-718-7747.

For Sale: Condo medical office, 2317 Sq. Ft., 3 Washington Circle, NW, across from GW Hospital, 1 block from

Metro, all rooms with sinks, 2 bathrooms, separate private doctor's entrance off the street, ideal for 1-3 MD's, \$1.3 M. Call 202-466-7711

Extraordinary NP or PA position available in one of DC's premier pediatric and adult allergy practices. Two beautiful brand new offices, downtown and Chevy Chase. Warm, friendly staff. A nice place to work. Excellent starting salary and a full range of benefits including health insurance. Must love patients. Call 301-718-7979 or fax resume to 301-718-7747

Space available for sublet (2 consultation rooms, 3 exams room and reception desk all furnished) attached to an existing Internal Medicine practice. Prime location on 19th Street NW near Metro. Potential to share electronic medical record system, equipment, and staff if desired. Please contact Sylvia at 202-728-9630 for details.

(See *MARKETPLACE*, p. 5)

Doctor's Forum

Teleconference Series



Free for MSDC members!

Free teleconference sessions on cutting edge issues in nutrition and research.

Listen and talk to leading medical experts from the comfort of your own home!

Sessions are held on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 8:00-8:45 p.m.

Each program features a short interview with prominent clinician or researcher, followed by open discussion from forum participants.

For the current schedule or more information, please contact Patty Slowik at 202-686-2210, ext. 338, or pslowik@pcrm.org.

Sponsored by PHYSICIANS COMMITTEE FOR RESPONSIBLE MEDICINE

(MARKETPLACE, from p. 4)

Georgetown: large office to sublet.

Spacious, large windowed, well furnished, office for rent. Rental includes use of waiting room, bathroom and kitchenette with refrigerator and microwave. This office is part of a large two office suite. The other office is occupied by a full time practicing psychiatrist. Location is on Thomas Jefferson Street NW between M St and the canal. Please call for further information; 202-965-8938

Check out all classified ads at: <http://www.msdc.org>. Click on Classified Ads.

Would you like to place an ad? Contact Barbara Allen for details, e-mail allen@msdc.org, phone 202-466-1800, ext. 103. MSDC members can post ads at no charge!

Online Career Center is Ideal Resource for Job Seekers and Recruiters

Earlier this year, MSDC launched its physician-specific, online career center to be the primary resource for the DC medical community to make online employment connections.

With the MSDC Career Center, employers can access quality candidates, upload job postings quickly and easily, access online reports with job activity statistics, and benefit from competitive pricing. Job seekers can take advantage of free and confidential resume posting, automated weekly e-mail notification of new job listings, and the ability to save jobs for later review.

MSDC has partnered with Boxwood Technologies to bring this service to its membership. Boxwood Technologies is a

leading provider of online career centers for professional associations and societies.

For more information and to access the Career Center, go to www.msdc.org and click on the "Online Career Center" link on the right side of the page.

Medical Collections

ATTORNEY SHERRY M. BERSON

Agent of Equifax Credit Reporting Bureau
Credit Listing - Address Tracing
Insurance Appeals - Billing Disputes
Contingency Fee



email: Bersonaty@verizon.net
P.O. Box 341788
Bethesda, MD 20827

Tel: (301) 229-6012
Fax: (301) 229-2017

Call or fax for explanation of services

Where you practice...

- ✓ says a lot about you to your **patients**.
- ✓ affects your **growth & success**.
- ✓ is one of the **biggest** decisions you will make.

Choosing **Gittleson Zuppas Commercial Realty**, Medical Real Estate Specialists, is the key to making the best decision for your practice. With over 20 years of experience in the metro area, we can help you, whatever your specialty, whatever your situation.

Contact Nick Zuppas & David Gittleson

Medical Office Real Estate Specialists

301-961-1941

Fax: 301-657-9776

Affiliated with all area medical societies



3 Bethesda Metro Center, Suite 750 • Bethesda, MD 20814



Highmark Medicare Services Selected as the New Medicare Carrier for DC

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services has completed the corrective action related to the protest of the Part A/Part B Medicare Administrative Contractor (A/B MAC) award for Jurisdiction 12 (J12) and has restored the contract award to Highmark Medicare Services (HMS) of Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. All of the workload will be transitioned into the new MAC contract by the end of 2008. A/B MAC J12 is comprised of Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The A/B MAC will serve as the first point of contact for the processing and payment of Medicare fee-for-service claims from hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, physicians and other health care practitioners in this geographical area.

The following are the current fiscal intermediaries (FIs) and carriers administering the program in J12 and the states they serve:

- Highmark Medicare Services (FI for District of Columbia, Maryland and Pennsylvania; carrier for Pennsylvania)
- Mutual of Omaha Insurance Company (FI for some providers in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania)
- Trailblazer Health Enterprises, LLC (carrier for Delaware, District of Columbia and Maryland)

The FIs and carriers listed above will continue to carry out their responsibilities until such time as the J12 A/B MAC is fully implemented.

Tiered and narrow physician networks

How to challenge your profile or placement

1. **Review your contract.** Does the insurer have the right to profile physicians and restrict their access to patients? Does the contract specify the appeal mechanism or other physician rights with respect to profiling or tiering? Make sure you do not miss any deadlines.
2. **Request a complete copy of your profile,** the profiling methodology and the data used. If the insurer does not respond, initiate a second contact. Do not accept incomplete information/data from the insurer. You should be given a complete analysis of the data and system used to determine your rating.
3. **Review your profile report carefully:**
 - a. Compare the data referenced in the report with your actual claims/chart data—is the insurer missing vital information or using another physician’s data?
 - b. Are there valid reasons for your practice variation? Examine your data for outlier cases, severity of illness, co-morbidities, unusual demographics and patient compliance problems. If cost efficiency indicators are not properly risk adjusted to control for such differences when they exist, measured physician performance will be inaccurate.
4. **Determine whether the profiling methodology is sound:**
 - a. What is the margin of error? Pay attention to the number of cases used to determine your rating—small sample sizes are the single biggest cause of inaccurate ratings.
 - b. Visit www.ama-assn.org/go/pfp for more information on the problems with current efficiency measurement programs and to download “Economic profiling of physicians: What is it? How is it done? What are the issues?” (This report is available to AMA members only.)
5. **Request reconsideration immediately** if the data are incorrect or do not belong to you, or if the profiling methodology has been inaccurately applied to your practice. Follow up with a certified letter, with return receipt requested, identifying the incorrect data or methodological issue. **Make sure you file a formal appeal.**
6. **Show your patients you care,** and educate them about physician profiling activities. Conduct patient satisfaction surveys, and order and display the AMA poster on unfair physician measurement systems. Poster #NC424607 is free to AMA members by calling (800) 621-8335.
7. **Contact your medical associations/societies** if you are unsuccessful in your attempts to reconcile your rating. The AMA has established a Web link to help you easily access contact information on your state and county medical associations. This service is available to AMA members only.

If you believe that an insurer is not providing you with the necessary information or is treating you unfairly, contact the AMA Private Sector Advocacy unit at (312) 464-4835.



DC Medicaid Issues Guidance for the Use of Tamper Resistant Prescription Pads Effective April 1, 2008

Beginning April 1, 2008, all written prescriptions for Medicaid recipients must be on paper with at least one tamper-resistant feature as outlined by CMS and defined by the DC Medicaid program. Beginning October 1, 2008 these same prescriptions must be on paper that meets all three baseline characteristics of tamper-resistant pads. CMS has outlined the three baseline characteristics as those that: 1) prevent unauthorized copying of a completed or blank prescription form; 2) prevent the erasure or modification of information written on the prescription by the prescriber; or 3) prevent the use of counterfeit prescription forms. Please note that electronic prescriptions, faxed prescriptions and prescriptions sent over the telephone are exempt from this requirement. Failure to comply with this requirement could result in a withholding of Medicaid reimbursement. Please see last month's *Newsline* for additional details (available online at www.msdc.org).

Health Literacy Conference *Improving Patient Outcomes in Primary Care*

The DC Academy of Family Physicians in conjunction with Howard University Department of Community and Family Medicine, will host a health literacy conference on Saturday, April 26, 2008 from 8:30am-2:30pm. Come learn practical and effective strategies for improving patient-provider communication, assess health literacy and create a "shame free" environment in your practice. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided and all attendees will receive an AAFP health literacy tool kit and more! Contact Finie Richardson for registration information at (202) 806-9849.

Coalition Calls for Transparency and Accurate Reporting Among Health Insurers

The American Medical Association applauds efforts by the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project to raise the bar on the reliability and validity of information that health insurers provide to patients. The Patient Charter drafted by the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project requires health insurers to be more transparent and balanced when providing information to patients. These crucial principles offer hope that patients will be able to trust the information to make informed health care choices. Safeguards must ensure that physician rating information does not result in reduced access to care or disrupt patients' longstanding relationships with their physicians.

Efforts by health insurers to rate physicians must not be driven solely by costs and economics. The primary goal of these programs must be to promote quality care using meaningful measures. The AMA has

long been involved in these efforts through the Physician Consortium for Performance Improvement and National Quality Forum. Instead of tiered and narrow networks, the AMA believes that providing valid data to physicians and patients will better improve the quality and efficiency of care.

The work of the Consumer-Purchaser Disclosure Project reinforces the need to protect access to care and the patient-physician relationship by requiring insurers to open their physician rating programs for careful evaluation to assess accuracy, integrity and fairness. "Though additional work must be done to accurately and fairly evaluate the individual work of physicians, the AMA sees the Patient Charter as an important step in the right direction and we offer our assistance in ensuring its criteria are appropriate and measurable."

— from the American Medical Association

No-cost Practice Management Consultation Services Included as a Member Benefit

The Society has partnered with the Healthcare Consulting Division of Snyder, Cohn, Collyer, Hamilton & Associates which will act as an Advisory Resource to MSDC members and their staffs who contact MSDC with practice management questions, carrier issues, billing & collection problems, and HR issues. These are usually 15-20 minute projects that may require some quick research, a phone call or two, or a need for forms, templates, or analysis tools. The cost of such a "project

consultation" is included in your Medical Society membership. In addition, should your needs be more extensive, SCCH will offer a 10 % discount program to all MSDC members (new clients to SCCH) for the first healthcare consulting project requested. For further information on these services please contact Maureen West McCarthy, CPA at 301-652-6708 ext. 333, or the Medical Society at 202 466-1800. MSDC encourages you to make use of this new Medical Society member benefit.

Take Me Out to the Ball Game!



Join the Medical Society and Alliance Foundation

**For a Baseball Game
Washington Nationals vs. Texas Rangers**

Saturday, June 21, 2008 • 7:10 pm • Nationals Park
Tickets: \$20 each (\$5 from each ticket Benefits MSAF)

To purchase tickets, go to www.msdc.org

Tekcollect Puts Dollars in Member's Pockets!!!

Tekcollect is changing the way medical practices are handling their account receivables and delinquent accounts management. With over 10,000 doctor's offices and 20,000 other businesses as clients, Tekcollect offers a low cost-fixed fee pricing structure that guarantees collection from those who are late in paying, or there is no charge.

The company was founded on the philosophy of offering business owners and medical professionals a better alternative to conventional collection agencies. Their clients save up to 75% of what conventional collection agencies charge. Their one time fixed fee reduces the overall cost of collection to less than 10% and their recovery ratio of over 50% is one of the highest in the industry and three times the national average.

TekCollect, Inc. is headquartered in Columbus, OH, and has divisional offices around the nation. They are licensed and authorized to operate in all 50 states and the

District of Columbia, giving them nationwide coverage and capability.

As their name implies, they put technology to work to maximize recovery ratios for their clients. But even more importantly, TekCollect is firmly committed to using non-alienating tactics that preserve our clients' image, integrity and patient relationships. All patients are contacted in compliance with state and federal laws including the Fair Debt Collections and Practices Act and HIPPA.

All amounts recovered are paid directly to their clients and Tekcollect provides 24 hour access and monitoring to all their clients.

For more information on how Tekcollect can assist your practice and remove the burden of collection from your staff contact Larry LaRose at 443-454-2357 or leave a message at 900-652-6500 ext.410. You can also visit them on the web at www.tekcollect.com.

(DC COUNCIL, from p. 1)

draw physicians and specialists back into our Medicaid program so that we can start tackling our city's health disparities."

The somewhat complicated funding scheme includes doubling the cigarette excise tax, requiring health maintenance organizations to pay a 2% tax on premiums, increasing the premium tax on commercial insurers from 1.7% to 2%, affordable premiums paid by the individual insured, and a CareFirst premium tax. While not contained in the legislation, CareFirst has committed an additional \$5,000,000 contribution. Medical Society representatives have been participating in stakeholder meetings to analyze the impact of the legislation on physicians and patients and the Society's Board of Directors will be meeting with Councilmember Catania to discuss any concerns. More information is available on the Society's web site at www.msdc.org. All indications are that the legislation will move swiftly through the Council, but not without modifications.

MSDC Newsline is published by the Medical Society of the District of Columbia.

202-466-1800 (phone)
202-452-1542 (fax)

Editor:
K. Edward Shanbaker

MSDC is the sole determinant of this publication's contents. Advertising in MSDC publications does not constitute or imply endorsement of the advertiser, its products, or its services, without a specific endorsement contract. For information on advertising rates, contact Barbara Allen, 202-466-1800, ext. 103.

Medical Society of the District of Columbia
1115 30th Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20007-3707
www.msdc.org
Address correction requested.

First Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
Rockville, MD
Permit No. 5832