

MSDC

Message From MSDC President Daniel I. Perlin, M.D.

March 27, 2013

Dear Colleague,

It's been five months since my installation as the President of the Medical Society of DC. I wanted to take this opportunity to let you all know that I have been hard at work supporting MSDC's and the physicians of the District of Columbia's interests. I have met with and spoken to many of our physician leaders and hospital administrators to keep abreast of what issues are important to our community, to find out how MSDC can best support quality care, patient safety and physician practice needs. To strengthen our voice and do more on behalf of you and your patients, I am working to increase MSDC's membership.

A Permanent Fix of the SGR, Revamping Prior Authorization, Helping Medicine Stay Safe and More.....

In my acceptance speech, I spoke of the SGR and how it must be repealed in order to avoid a 26.5% cutback in Medicare payments, because we physicians should not be the ones to carry that burden if the SGR was not fixed. Thankfully, as you know, the SGR cuts were averted in the fiscal cliff deal when the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 was signed into law this last January. However, a 25 billion dollar SGR patch was created that fixes the SGR only through the end of 2013. This means we still have much work to do in protecting our interests and **we still must come up with a solution that guarantees our seniors continued access to their doctors from 2014 and beyond.**

We still need a permanent fix of the SGR and we need tort reform! Both of these would limit health care costs and protect doctors allowing them to focus on patient care instead of threatened income reduction and medical liability. So, why then drive up the cost of health care by introducing legislation which is packaged under nice names like the Patient Protection Act of 2013?

Let me explain: legislatively mandated nurse to patient staffing ratios sound great on the surface, right? The fact is, California hospitals have had a similar law in place for a while. One study (Donaldson, et. al., 2005) **failed to demonstrate an improvement in quality of patient care after the imposition of mandatory ratios, but did demonstrate an increase in hospital costs.** Legislatively mandated nurse to patient staffing ratios result in unfunded mandates because the current payment system treats nursing care as a fixed cost, which gets passed on to insurance companies and individuals...like your patients! What ends up happening is hospitals have no choice but to decrease the number of unlicensed assistive personnel and housekeepers to compensate for the loss in revenue. When health care costs go up, people avoid getting the care they need. So in actuality the "so-called" Patient Protection Act of 2013 is actually detrimental and does harm to those we are here to protect! That is why **MSDC and I, personally, stand with the DC hospital community in opposition to this bill and will continue to work to eliminate government mandates that negatively impact patient care!**

On other fronts, MSDC continues to work hard getting the Uniform Electronic Prior Authorization Form Amendment Act of 2013 implemented here in the District of Columbia. We have done our part to testify at a hearing to make this Act a reality and we continue to work hard to get it passed as law. Anyone who has ever dealt with the incredibly difficult task of filing multiple forms for different insurers to get patients approved for the procedures they desperately need knows that **this type of legislation will save time and make physicians' and hospitals' work significantly easier.**

Finally, as you all know from my acceptance speech, I have a real passion for helping doctors and for advocating for our profession. This is why I chair the Medical Society of the District of Columbia's Physician Health Committee, which administers the Physician Health Program (PHP). Recently the MSDC Board, at my request, recommended our Bylaws be amended to allow the MSDC/PHP to monitor and help other licensed health professionals in the District of Columbia. I am a strong believer that this is the right thing to do. We have the ability to support the medical community and ensure patient safety with this excellent and highly successful program. I have been working closely with the Department of Health (DOH) and the Board

of Medicine (BOM) to make this a reality and have bolstered our PHP committee by inviting several well-respected Psychiatrists and Addiction Specialists as well as a Medical Review Officer. We at MSDC have strengthened our relationship with the DOH and the BOM by being willing and standing up as the right people to do this job. **We are supporting our physicians and the medical community and we are acting as leaders by helping medicine stay safe.** I am particularly proud of this new possibility, but I am asking your support because whether we go forward with this initiative is really up to you.

Ultimately, the membership of MSDC has the final say and a voting ballot will be sent out soon asking if you agree or disagree with this decision. **I am asking for you to vote YES on changing the Bylaws to allow MSDC to be leaders in the medical community** and to support the interests of the DOH who have asked us to take on this important initiative. I believe it's the right thing to do. Who better to determine if a medical professional is safe to provide patient care than doctors?

A lot more is happening at MSDC than I could possibly convey in this letter. Anyone who was at the Wizards game in early March to support and encourage our younger members and forge a stronger relationship with the Washington Radiology Associates, with whom we held this event, will tell you that MSDC is not ALL about politics! So I encourage you to join the Medical Society at its next event, and mark your calendar for our 2013 Annual Meeting which will take place October 23rd.

Medicine is the greatest profession on earth and I am proud to be the President of the Medical Society of the District of Columbia. I will continue to do the best I can to support you and the safe practice of medicine here in our great city. Please feel to call me at (301) 938-6707 and just chat about what concerns you and let me know how MSDC can help.

Sincerely,
Daniel I. Perlin, M.D.
President, Medical Society of the District of Columbia

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