

Northern New England CHAPTER Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont **NEWSLETTER**



2008-2009 GOVERNORS

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Announcing NNE-ACC Town Meetings

Join us and share your thoughts!

Over the coming months, the Northern New England Chapter of the American College of Cardiology (NNE-ACC) will be hosting Town Meetings in each of the three states represented by the Chapter - Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. The purpose of these Town Meetings will be to bring the members of each state together to determine what they would like to see from the NNE-ACC in the coming years. "We would like to ask the members what role the chapter can play in their practice," explained Marco Diaz, Maine Governor. "Do members need legislative support, educational opportunities or help with socio-economic issues? By working directly with members, we can tailor the Chapter's activities to meet those needs."

Although cardiologists face a lot of the same challenges, each state has slightly different practice patterns and requirements. "By hosting a separate town meeting in each state, we can individualize the activities within that region and incorporate these goals into the overall strategic plan for the Chapter," said J. Christian Higgins, Governor from Vermont. "What we face in Vermont is slightly different than our colleagues in New Hampshire and Maine."

Locations will be chosen based on the geographic distribution of members in each state. "We will pick a central location where the majority of members reside or practice," said New Hampshire Governor Robert Capodilupo. "We want to involve as many members as possible in the planning of our programs and initiatives and we hope members will take this opportunity to tell us what they want."

In addition to the town meetings, NNE-ACC will be sending a blast email to all NNE-ACC members asking for input and ideas on future Chapter activities. If you are unable to attend the town meeting in your state, please take a few minutes to reply to the email with your suggestions. Please watch your email for the date and location of your Town Meeting.

NNE-ACC Announces New Management

The Northern New England Chapter of the American College of Cardiology is pleased to announce that it has contracted with a new management group – PRRI, Inc. of Beverly, Massachusetts. "PRRI began providing administrative, meeting, and legislative support to the Chapter on July 1st and we are looking forward to a very productive and beneficial relationship," said Marco Diaz, MD, Maine Governor.

PRRI has been a leader in the medical association management industry for over 40 years. "We are looking forward to working with the leadership and increasing Chapter activities and visibility," noted Stan Alger, Executive Director. "We are hoping to expand the educational offerings of the Chapter and to work closely with the American College of Cardiology (ACC)."

During a number of meetings over the past several months, the new management team and the Governors have discussed some proposed activities including a series of town meetings in each state (please see related article above) and an annual meeting of the Chapter in 2009. "We are excited about hosting an Annual Meeting with members from all three states and will be developing the preliminary program over the next several weeks," explains Dr. J. Christian Higgins, MD, Vermont Governor. "Watch your email for details on the meeting."

In addition to educational and legislative support, the Chapter will be coordinating activities and communications from the ACC and has established a productive rapport with the national office. "The ACC has been working in tandem with Stan and the new management team to ensure that the Northern New England Chapter is fully engaged in ACC activities," stated Dr. Robert Capodilupo, New Hampshire Governor.

From the Governors

MAINE

Marco Diaz, MD



It is a pleasure to serve as the President of the Northern New England Chapter of the American College of Cardiology. In this time of rapid change in health care, it is critically important that the cardiology community be

actively engaged in health care reform. We must focus on providing high quality, cost efficient care. The Maine Chapter of the ACC has undertaken several important steps in the past 2 years in this regard.

The ACC Quality Committee in Maine has shown leadership by participating in the Pathways to Excellence Program for the Maine Health Management Coalition. Our engagement in these efforts and our recent participation in the ACC Legislative Conference in Washington will ensure that cardiologists are at the table for ourselves and for our patients as these reforms occur.

We have also hired a new management company (PRRI) with extensive experience in developing new and innovative programs for our chapter. We are very excited to undertake an ACC scientific session sponsored by the Tri-state chapter in the fall of 2009.

I look forward to working with all of you this year and welcome your participation in chapter activities.

With best regards,
Marco N. Diaz, MD, FACC

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Robert Capodilupo, MD



It's a pleasure to serve as the ACC governor for New Hampshire and I am looking forward to a very active year ahead. It's a very exciting time for the chapter, as we have hired a new management company and are in the processing of developing new programs and initiatives to not only benefit

chapter members but also to re-ignite the flame of our chapter.

This issue of the newsletter is just one example of the communications and activities we will be undertaking in the next few years. Additional projects envisioned include a series of "Town Meetings" where small, informal gatherings of local ACC members occurs. This has been trialed in various ACC chapters throughout the US and feedback has been quite positive. These meetings would allow me to review what your ACC is doing as far as advocacy, education, and quality. Given the changing landscape of our economy, the voice of ACC advocacy may indeed be one of paramount importance.

Please read through this issue of the Newsletter and let us know what you think. We welcome your comments and encourage your suggestions as we move the Chapter forward.

In addition, if you have an issue that you would like to address or discuss, either on a regional or national level, please feel free to share it with me. My e-mail address is listed on page one. As alluded to above, these are challenging times for cardiology on many levels. Together, I believe we can continue to build our state's ACC chapter and influence those issues facing our subspecialty on a local and national level.

Robert Capodilupo, MD, FACC

From the American College of Cardiology

Legislative Highlights

The following is a brief recap of the Board of Governors Report. For complete information and the latest news from the ACC, please visit the ACC website www.acc.org.

CMS Releases Final 2009 Medicare Physician Payment Rule

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released the final 2009 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, which includes some good news for cardiology in terms of administrative burden, but some unfortunate news about physician payment. While ACC staff continues to review the rule in detail, highlights include the following:

- ♦ IDTFs: Thanks to the combined efforts of ACC and other cardiovascular specialty societies, CMS is deferring a final decision on its proposal to require physician practices that provide diagnostic testing services to register as IDTFs.
- ♦ Payment Rates: Although Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (MIPPA) put in place a 1.1 percent update to the Medicare conversion factor, CMS projects that overall

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VERMONT

J. Christian Higgins, MD

I am writing to you as the newly installed Governor for Vermont, Northern New England Chapter of the American College of Cardiology (NNE-ACC). Marco Diaz, MD FACC, Governor for Maine; Robert Capodilupo, MD FACC, Governor for New Hampshire

and I are bringing life back to the Northern New England Chapter. The College has been working hard to gain a position at the Healthcare table, trying to influence healthcare policy and bring pressure to bear on legislative issues. As we see in the news and read in the papers on a daily basis, Healthcare is being decided by large insurance companies and governmental regulation. If we are not seated at the table we will likely be on the menu (Lewin 2006).

The Northern New England Chapter of the ACC was chartered in November, 1991 by Dr. Martin Lewinter representing Vermont, Dr. Costas T. Lambrew representing Maine and Dr. Robert M. Lavery representing New Hampshire. Their original intent was to share information, science and their

experiences in a collegial manner and foster a sense of camaraderie between colleagues practicing in Northern New England. We are fortunate to have two major teaching institutions in our practice area. Unfortunately this has also led to a diminished need for the local sharing of information as academia is local and readily available. Over time, the enthusiasm for and the activities of the NNE-ACC have waned. The present political climate in Healthcare combined with the CMS's budget constraints and the flawed SGR formula present challenges and opportunities for our involvement. The need for a strong and unified voice, advocating not only for our patients but also for ourselves, has arisen. I would emphasize that we advocate not as a trade organization protecting our interests but as a professional society advocating for our patients and for the ongoing delivery of high quality healthcare that only we, as cardiovascular specialists, can deliver.

The current Governors of New Hampshire and Maine have included a statement in this inaugural NNE-ACC Newsletter. I hope that you will read them. I will be contacting each of you regarding any concerns or issues that you may have specific to your patients or your practice. It is my hope that we can develop a relationship with our legislators that will allow them to see us as a resource and ally instead of merely consumers, sacrificial lambs on the altar for their political survival.

J. Christian Higgins, MD FACC

Legislative Highlights from the ACC

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Medicare payments to cardiology will fall by 2 percent in 2009. This cut results primarily from two policy changes: the transition to a new formula for calculating practice expense relative value units (RVUs) and the budget neutrality adjustment provision of MIPPA.

- ♦ Coding Changes: CMS also announced the payments for a series of new codes related to cardiac device monitoring, as well as new bundled codes that describe transthoracic echocardiography with spectral and color flow Doppler and stress echocardiography with stress ECG monitoring. The ACC and MedAxiom are holding a special Webinar to address these changes.

The final rule also includes detailed requirements for the 2009 Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) and electronic prescribing (e-prescribing) and increases bonus payments for participation to 2 percent for each program. The final rule also adds additional reporting methods, including using the ACC's IC3 Program® as a reporting alternative.

Sen. Baucus Releases Detailed Health Care Plan

Senate Finance Committee Chair Max Baucus (D-Mont.) recently released a detailed universal health coverage plan that is "broadly compatible" with the proposal by President-elect Barack Obama, the New York Times reports. The plan, titled "Call to Action, Health Reform 2009," primarily focuses on

providing meaningful coverage and care to all Americans, emphasizing higher quality, greater value and less costly care and weeding out waste, eliminating overpayments and designing a sustainable financing system. The ACC plans to continue to work with Baucus, the new presidential administration and others in Congress to ensure physicians have a seat at the table for all of these discussions around health care reform.

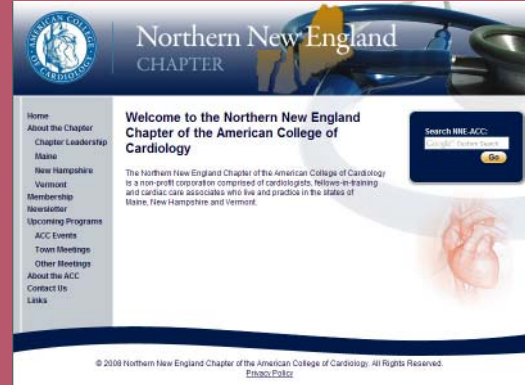
Majority of Physicians Found 2007 PQRI 'Difficult,' According to AMA Survey

The American Medical Association (AMA) has released the results of its physician survey on the 2007 Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI). The AMA, which collected 408 surveys online, found that physicians were dissatisfied with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) responsiveness to questions about the program, had difficulties using the feedback form and were confused about the receipt of bonus payments. Close to 61 percent of respondents described participating in the program as difficult.

The ACC is working to address concerns raised by members regarding the reporting mechanisms and feedback reports for the 2007 PQRI and is reaching out directly to CMS, as well as communicating with congressional offices key to the program's authorization. The ACC will continue to work with CMS to improve the PQRI program and address concerns so that physicians can improve their performance moving forward.

Check out the new website at
www.nneacc.org

- ◆ Stay up to date on Chapter actions and initiatives.
- ◆ Register online for NNEACC meetings and programs.
- ◆ Links to related sites.
- ◆ Read the latest NNEACC Newsletter.



Stay connected and stay ahead.

SAVE THE DATE

**Northern New England Chapter of the
American College of Cardiology**

ANNUAL MEETING



**Saturday
November 7, 2009
Sheraton Harborside Hotel
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**