



Missouri Chapter

E News - November, 2004

8816 Manchester, Suite 314 • St. Louis, MO 63144 • (800) 362-1672 Phone • (314) 447-0489 Fax

E-Newsletter – October 28, 2004

A Message from the Governor

As your Governor, Missouri Chapter, American College of Cardiology, I want to greet each of you and hope you will contact me either by phone or email for specific input into the cardiology affairs of Missouri and the ACC. I am honored to be your Governor for the next three years, and will do my best to represent your interests and concerns to the MO Board of Councilors and the National ACC Board of Governors representing all 50 States and the Armed Forces.

Board of Councilors Strategic Planning Meeting, July 9, 2004

Our current council had their initial meeting on this date, with the purpose of getting acquainted, plus meeting with Jennifer Ray Beckman, Director of ACC Chapter Affairs and member of the ACC staff, Bethesda, MD. Jennifer related to us the mission of American College of Cardiology, and then stimulated us to get specific about goals and activities for the Missouri Chapter. The following Goals were established:

1. To educate members regarding ACC goals: education, advocacy and quality of care.
2. To educate politicians re: real quality of care versus insurance approach to patient care.
3. Focus on quality of care issues for physicians, with emphasis on the published ACC/AHA Clinical Practice Guidelines.
4. To get more cardiologists involved with advocacy and connect with Legislators so they can view us as a reliable resource when they have questions.
5. To identify and focus on member needs in different regions of Missouri.
6. To be realistic about matching needs with resources, especially as related to staff. We have one staff member, Tonya Ferguson, Executive Director for the Missouri Chapter, and she is a part-time employee.

7. To develop Cardiac Care team/case management benefits for the patient and practitioners. However, this was later tabled since we decided to wait until ACC fine-tunes their cardiac care Associate (non-physician) program focus.

Council Meetings

Decided to meet four times per year, face-to-face twice, with two conference calls. We discovered the ACC directory is outdated regarding addresses, phone numbers and the lack of email addresses. Even Council Members are incomplete; therefore, we will initially get all data on all Council members and then ask for all cardiologists in the state to forward their updated personal and professional information to Tonya Ferguson at Tonya@fergusonmgmt.com; 314-447-0490 office. My office is located at the Mid America Heart Institute, 4401 Wornall Road, Kansas City, Missouri, 64111, 816-932-5797; aforker@saint-lukes.org; 913-579-3990 cell phone; 913-451-3990 home phone.

ACC and Chapter Dues are Due!

Just a reminder that membership dues were recently mailed by the ACC. If you have not paid your ACC and Chapter dues please remember to pay them soon. Chapter dues are important to the well being of the organization. Your association officers and council are good financial stewards of your dues money so help us out and make this a priority.

Advocacy

Chaired by Dr. Frank Bleyer, St. Louis. The Council strongly recommends every physician become better informed about the political process plus make personal contact with local, state and national congressmen. Dr. Bleyer sent a letter representing the Advocacy Committee to all members on September 14, 2004. It is important for you to read this letter before the 2004 election. Even though tort reform is not the only issue at stake, certainly every cardiologist should know his or her legislators stance in Missouri. Further information will be forwarded and discussed in the future as needed, such as if and when a National Health Care plan is formulated; the issue of whom provides free care; availability and costs of drugs, etc.

Education

1. Annual Meeting-For several years we have not had an annual meeting, because of previous poor attendance. The questions remains: is the Missouri Cardiologist interested in having an annual meeting or do they plan to just attend national ACC meetings for their CME? The ACC is gradually modifying their focus with a greater degree of online/internet/CD ROM data already published. Cardiosource is now a very valid method to stay updated with Late Breaking Clinical Trials from National meetings; access to slides for presentation on Power Point and with premium membership full access to all the major journals. Therefore, we need feedback from all of the membership with the initial aim to think about May 2005 or Fall 2005 for a meeting.
2. Fellows in Training: We strongly want to encourage all Cardiology Fellowship training programs in the state of Missouri (University of Missouri-Kansas City/Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute, University of Missouri-Columbia, Washington University, St. Louis University) to participate. In fact, to make an annual meeting successful, it would be mandatory to have Fellows from all four training programs attend, participate and present clinical and research data. The aim is to develop a poster competition with monetary awards. Another key aim would have a job fair and the opportunity for Fellows to meet practitioners in the State for future job placement.
3. Cardiology for the Primary Care Physician: Another potential goal would be to define the role and limits for primary care versus cardiologists' care at a meeting focusing on the needs of Primary Care Physicians in Cardiovascular Disease. Speakers would be invited from all four medical schools and cardiology training programs, plus speakers from the private practice perspective would also be important.

Web Page

The ACC is encouraging all Chapters to participate in the national identity program which includes redesign of letterhead, brochures, and web pages. The Council voted to develop a new web page. Members will be receiving a post card early next week that will include their ACC member number and password. Be sure to go online to access information about our legislative activities, the upcoming CPT programs in St. Louis and Kansas City, the code fax service and the new job bank. After you receive your login information, you can access the web page at <http://www.moacc.org>.

ACC Legislative Conference-September 13-15, 2004, Washington, DC

Drs. Alan Forker, James Maloney and Craig Lundgren of Kansas City; Dr. Jerry Kennett of Columbia, and Dr. Bruce Lindsay of St. Louis represented the state of Missouri. There were thirty-three states represented. From the perspective of a physician and cardiologist who was very skeptical of the political process and the value of talking directly with a legislator, I personally have a changed opinion: every physician and every cardiologist should make an effort to learn more about the political process and become involved in this process with emphasis on contacting your local and state congressmen and women. The ideal relationship, after observing the experience, mentoring and expertise of Dr. Jerry Kennett, is to become personally acquainted with one or more of legislators, so they will trust and seek out your opinion.

We visited the offices of Senators Chris Bond and James Talent, and the offices of Representatives Kenny Hulshof and Karen McCarthy.

Our focus was on two key issues: Medical Liability Reform and Medicare Physician Payment Formula. I suspect most physicians are aware of the escalating medical malpractice costs and insurance premiums dramatically increasing. The key information is that over half of jury awards exceeded \$1 million and the average jury award is \$3.5 million. The ACC supports legislation reform that would:

- A. Allow unlimited economic damages
- B. Create an effective cap on non-economic damages
- C. Allow damages in proportion to fault
- D. Give States the flexibility to enact their own reforms

In regards to Medicare Physician Payment update, the Centers for Medicare Services (CMS) utilize a flawed formula that is based on the sustainable growth rate (SGR). The formula does not work: the SGR formula has never been adjusted for medical advances; new technology; older and sicker populations; the shift of in site-of-service from hospitals to physician offices; the addition of preventive and screening benefits; and Medicare-

covered prescription outpatient drugs are inappropriately included in the formula since physicians do not control the costs of drugs. If Congress does not act, physicians face cuts of 5% yearly for at least seven years beginning January 1, 2006.

In summary, I encourage each of you to become involved in Missouri Chapter, American College of Cardiology. Wherever your interests and talents reside, we can use your input and expertise to further our efforts in physician and patient education, advocacy efforts with our legislators, and represent the highest quality of care in a Nation with the best medical care in the world. May we go forth together and do the best we can.

This is a starting point, please give me your feedback and let me know if we need more or less than what I have included.

Sincerely,

Alan D. Forker, MD, FACC
Missouri Governor
American College of Cardiology