



Summer 2001 American College of Surgeons

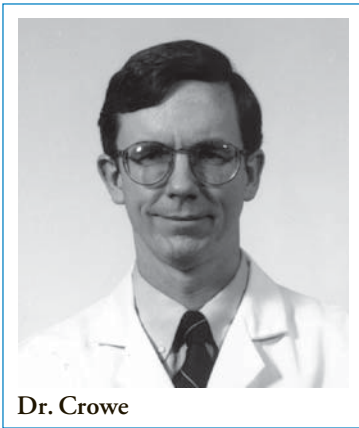
Newsletter

OHIO CHAPTER

President's Message

by Joseph P. Crowe, Jr., MD, FACS

Translating Our Mission



Dr. Crowe

The mission of the Ohio Chapter has been to promote the interests and education of our membership. As a response to concerns voiced by many of us and as part of our strategic planning session held this past fall, our mission was expanded to include that of "advocacy." It is no wonder in this era of "managed medicine" that we are seeking allies.

How can the Ohio Chapter accomplish this part of the mission? Concrete suggestions, such as retaining a lobbyist or possibly an insurance ombudsman, are being considered. Even if these suggestions materialize, those individuals who represent us will need to enlist our participation. In effect, we are the Chapter, and we have the most to gain or to lose.

The Ohio Chapter provides each of us with opportunities for participation. Historically,

these opportunities have been focused around our spring meeting. Our recent spring meeting in Dayton was a prime example of how didactic lectures, courses, and social functions can blend into a strong tradition. Linda Barney, our chair for the Dayton meeting, did a wonderful job. As we look to the future, the spring meeting will continue to be our major focus each year.

To be successful in our new mission of advocacy there must be a commitment from each one of us. By choosing to become involved, we define our Chapter, and we define our future.

How can we become involved?

You will find a listing of all of the Chapter committees and their respective chairs included with this newsletter. Participation in Chapter committees is a great way to become involved and to contribute. I encourage you to call or e-mail the committee chair who can give you the specifics concerning committee activities for this year. Your district councilors and Ohio Governors are also included on the list. I hope that you contact them with your thoughts and suggestions at any time during the year. They, in turn, will bring up your issues with the Executive Committee.

The Chapter offers other opportunities, particularly for political and legislative involvement. For the past two years,

members of the Chapter have participated in a legislative day in Columbus. Two years ago, the Chapter organized this activity, and this past spring, we joined with members of the Ohio State Medical Association. These experiences provided us with a chance to meet with various legislators and discuss a variety of issues. These meetings were very enlightening for all the participants. We plan to organize another visitation day next spring. You will receive information about this activity in advance.

Members of our Chapter also participated in a similar legislative day in Washington that is sponsored by the American College of Surgeons Washington office. This past year, Margaret Dunn, Gary Williams, and Richard Treat attended. The next Washington visitation is planned for the spring of 2003. Our Chapter has also made a request to be considered for the College's legislative aide program. This program allows for legislative aides from Washington to spend two days visiting a hospital and shadowing surgeons and residents while they work. It is hoped that the Chapter can bring this program to Ohio in 2002.

I want to thank each of you for the opportunity to serve as President this year. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you to further our mission of not only education, but also of advocacy.

Cancer Committee Report

by Michael E. Stark, MD, FACS, Chair, Cancer Liaison to ACS

The Cancer Committee continues to be one of the best attended and most active committees of the Ohio Chapter. A total of 19 members attended the meeting held in Dayton on May 9, 2001.

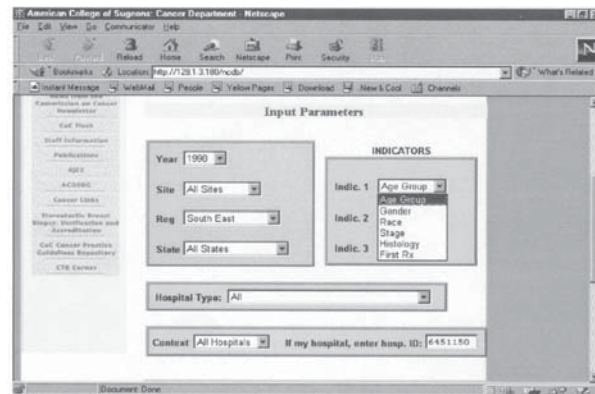
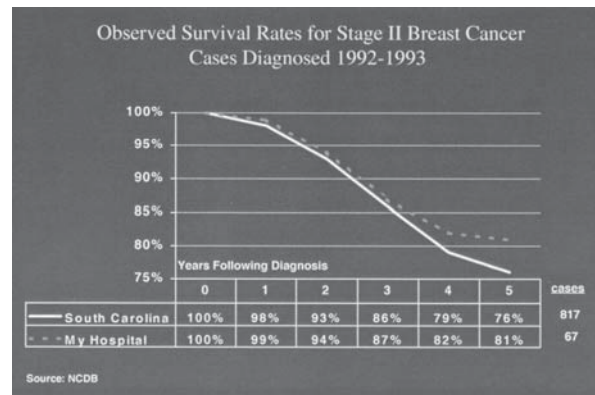
The relationships within the Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons (ACoS) and its relationships with other organizations are being refined. The Commission on Cancer is being restructured, and although the final form has not been decided upon, it is likely that a small number of standing committees will remain. The additional focus will be on specific cancer site committees.

The relationship of the ACoS and the American Cancer Society (ACS) is becoming much closer. The ACS is the funding source for the Committee on Cancer Liaison that allows each approved cancer program to maintain a Cancer Liaison Physician (CLP). Our two organizations, along with others, are working toward accomplishing the 2015 goals: reducing the incidence of cancer by 25 percent, reducing the mortality of cancer by 50 percent, and increasing the equality of life of cancer survivors by the year 2015. The key is the relationship among the cancer committee of the approved program and the local ACS unit. The Ohio Division of the ACS has completed the needs assessment of all areas of Ohio. This information is well known to the cancer control officer of each unit of the ACS. All CLP need to contact their local cancer control officer to become familiar with this data and the programs that exist or that can be developed to work toward the goals.

The National Cancer Data Base (NCDB) is going to become very user friendly. People with authorization (by password) will be able to access their program's data and compare them with state, regional, and national data.

Any authorized individual can analyze the data in an infinite number of ways. A couple of examples are presented.

The next year should prove to be very active with cancer issues. I am honored to represent the Ohio Chapter and all the CLP in Ohio to the ACoS. I am also now representing the Ohio Chapter to the Ohio Division of the ACS. As state chair, I am always available to help the CLP. More efficient communication for committees would be helpful. Please e-mail your e-mail address to Mestark@sev.org.



The Importance of Clinical Trials

by Michael E. Stark, MD, FACS, Chair, Cancer Liaison to ACS

The major impact on improving cancer care has come from clinical trials. The monumental improvement in pediatric cancer results is due to participation in clinical trials. Currently, about 60 percent of all pediatric

cancer patients are treated on a clinical trial. Only about 3 to 4 percent of adult cancer patients are treated on clinical trials.

The Cancer Liaison Physicians on Ohio need to take a lead in educating their

community and their colleagues as to the importance of clinical trials. The National Institute of Health maintains a Web site (<http://clinicaltrials.gov/>) that can search available clinical trials.

Ohio Chapter Bylaws Update

by Robert M. Zollinger, Jr., MD, FACS, Chair, Bylaws Committee

The bylaws of the Ohio Chapter are reviewed by the Executive Council biannually. As reported at the annual business meeting in Dayton on Friday, 11 May, the Council approved several editorial clarifications. First, the state chair of the Committee on Cancer Liaison of the ACS is the correct title for this ex-officio member of Council, and second, the annual essay contest (Article VIII) has been renamed the Resident Research Forum. Eligible interns and residents were defined as those in accredited surgical residency training programs in Ohio.

Of specific interest to the general membership, Article XV, Amendments, was clarified in that only an *active member* can propose alterations or additions to the bylaws in the form of a written resolution presented at the time of the annual meeting of the Chapter.

The bylaws may be reviewed on the Ohio Chapter Web site (www.ohiofacs.org), or may be obtained from the Chapter office by calling toll-free 877.677.3227 or 937.586.3717.

Congratulations to New Officers



Dr. Falcone

Robert E. Falcone, MD, FACS, Senior Operations Officer of Grant Medical Center, was elected President-Elect of the Ohio Chapter during the May annual membership business meeting. Dr. Falcone is well known for his work with the Ohio Committee on Trauma, on which he served as chair for six years. Under his leadership and with the help of OCOT lobbyist Sally Jo Zuspan, Ohio House Bill 138 became a reality. The culmination of efforts of all the previous OCOT chairs and members for the last 20 years were richly rewarded with the passage of the bill creating a state-wide trauma system. Dr. Falcone was also instrumental in the Ohio Chapter's decision to embark upon a formalized strategic planning session last fall. He will assume the presidency of the Ohio Chapter at the May 2002 annual meeting.

Jan Elston, Zanesville, was reelected Southeast District Councilor for a second four-year term; and John Dutro, Dayton, was elected Southwest District Councilor for a four-year term. Dr. Dutro was the Chapter's representative to the Annual Young Surgeons Meeting in Chicago in 1994.

Please refer to the center insert for contact information for all of the Ohio Chapter officers and committee chairs.

AN INVITATION

You are cordially invited to a luncheon with the new Ohio Initiates of the College on Tuesday, October 9, from 11:30 am–1:30 pm in the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, Room 242, New Orleans, LA. Please RSVP by October 1 by calling 937.586.3717, or toll-free 877.677.3227.

Welcome to New Members (February–July)

Fellows

E. Luke Bold, Mentor
Jean Stevenson, Cleveland
Jeffrey Sussman, Cincinnati
E. Steve Woodle, Cincinnati
Alan Mong, Chillicothe
W. John Kitzmiller, Cincinnati
Kelly M. McLean, Cincinnati
John Porter, Youngstown
James Geiger, Toledo
Theodore Polley, Toledo

Associate Fellows

Joseph F. Buell, Cincinnati
Jill R. Dietz, Cleveland
Gregory M. Fedele, Beachwood
Sandra L. Miller, Cincinnati
Elizabeth Saughnessy, Cincinnati
Rebecca Brown, Cincinnati
Keith Gersin, Loveland

Candidate Group

Christopher A. Groves, Vandalia
Grady D. Alsabrook, Cincinnati
Kfir Ben-David, Cincinnati
Victoria L. Hogan, Cincinnati
Lynn C. Huffman, Cincinnati
Thomas L. Husted, Cincinnati
Benjamin Mitchell, Cincinnati
Prakash K. Pandalai, Cincinnati
Bart Chess, Columbus
Susie Choe, Columbus
Hosam El Sayed, Powell
Luis Reyes, Columbus
Syed Ali, Columbus
Carlos Domingo, Columbus
George Galvan, Columbus
M. Ann Kuhn, Columbus
Sarah McMillan, Columbus
Sarah Nargi, Columbus
John Ogden, Columbus
Olusegun Osinbowale, Columbus
Bryan Tillman, Columbus
Gregory Walker, Columbus
Michael Walsh, Columbus
Chang-Jiane Zheng, Columbus

Crowe Elected 45th President

Joseph P. Crowe, Jr., MD, FACS, was elected 45th president of the Ohio Chapter during the annual membership business meeting in May. He has been a member of the Ohio Chapter since 1988, when he became a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. In 1991, he was the Chapter's representative to the Annual Young Surgeons Meeting in Chicago, and he has served on Council since 1991 as Chair of the Committee on Cancer, as treasurer, and as president-elect. He also serves on the Committee on Applicants for the College, and has participated in both the Chapter Visitation Program in Washington, DC, and the Ohio Legislative Day in Columbus.

A native Texan, Dr. Crowe received his BA degree from Amherst College in Massachusetts and medical degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. He completed a residency in surgery at University Hospitals of Cleveland, followed by a fellowship in surgical oncology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. More recently, he completed the executive program in practice management from the CCF Office of Practice Management and the CWRU Weatherhead School of Management. Dr. Crowe is currently Director of Breast Services at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation.

Inadequate Supply of Tetanus Toxoid and Related Products

by Wesley Furste, MD, FACS

In the March 16, 2001, issue of the *Centers for Disease Control Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, there was an update on the supply of tetanus and diphtheria toxoids and of diphtheria and tetanus toxoids and acellular pertussis vaccine.

In this update, it was pointed out that during the last quarter of 2000, the U.S. Public Health Service learned of a shortage of tetanus and diphtheria toxoids (Td) and tetanus toxoid (TT), resulting from decreased productions of these vaccines by the two U.S. manufacturers. On January 10, 2001, Wyeth Lederle announced it had stopped production of tetanus toxoid-containing products. Although a small amount of Td is produced by the University of Massachusetts for local distribution, Aventis Pasteur is now the sole nationwide distributor of Td and TT. Aventis Pasteur is shipping limited quantities of vaccine to ensure a wide distribution of available doses.

That such a shortage can occur, I learned from my granddaughter, Hilary Furste Ryder, a first-year medical student in a large medical school on the eastern seaboard. In an e-mail to me on April 27, 2001, Hilary stated that when working in the Emergency Department during the evening of April 25, 2001, no TT was available and would not be available until the next day.

It would, indeed, be unfortunate if tetanus occurs in our country due to an inadequate supply of TT and related products. As of December 30, 2000, for the entire year, only 26 cases of tetanus were reported for the approximately one-quarter billion individuals in our country to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Editor's Note: Dr. Furste is a past Governor of the Ohio Chapter and was recipient of the 1987 Distinguished Service Award.

Highlights of the June Meeting of the Board of Regents

Beginnings of a PAC Approval

The Regents approved the recommendation from the Health Policy Steering Committee to establish a task force to make the necessary plans to form a 501(C6) organization for the purpose of enhancing the College's legislative advocacy program and disseminating its health policy agenda.

ACS Strategic Plan

The Regents approved the ACS Strategic Plan. To meet its goals and objectives, the College staff will be reorganized into four major divisions:

Education Division will include all continuing education, including increased ACS presence in Web-based learning, interactive education, and self-directed learning.

Research and Optimal Patient Care Division will coordinate all activities to improve the delivery of care including coordinating ACS data banks and expanding their use.

Advocacy and Health Policy Division will coordinate developing a proactive, prioritized surgical agenda for public policy debate and an agenda to further the quality care of the surgical patient.

Member Services Division will coordinate all programs and services developed for College members, chapters, advisory councils, and international activities. A customer service center will be created to support all ACS programs and members, and enhanced programs will be developed for ACS chapters in education, planning, and support.

The 2001 Study of Fellows

Based on responses from a sample of 1,200 Fellows, broad support exists for the quality of current College programs, but numerous Fellows wish to see the College more actively involved in managed care issues, both at the negotiation of contracts and development of standards levels and at the legislative and policy levels. The Fellows indicated a clear preference for a stronger College role in advocating public policies to enhance the profession and the provision of high-quality medical services.

2001 Resident Research Forum Results

Basic Science Awards

Nicholas Zyromski, MD, Medical College of Ohio at Toledo, 1st place, Role of Extrinsic Neural Mechanisms in Control of Ileal Motor Activity

Brian McGuinness, MD, The Ohio State University Medical Center, Columbus, 2nd place, Abdominal Sepsis Reactivates Pulmonary Cytomegalovirus Infection

Bruce Robb, MD, University of Cincinnati Medical Center, Cincinnati, 3rd place, Sodium Arsenite-Induced Stabilization of I κ B α in IL-1 β -Treated Human Enterocytes Does Not Require Activation of the Heat Shock Response



(L-R) Drs. Mak, Zyromski, Theodoropoulos, and McGuinness

Clinical Science Awards

Elizabeth Mittendorf, MD, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Heights, Stanley O. Hoerr Clinical Surgery Award, 1st place, Late Outcomes of Diagnostic Laparoscopy for Chronic Abdominal Pain

Grace Mak, MD, University of Cincinnati Medical Center, Cincinnati, 2nd place, Prognostic Factors in the selection of Non-Beating Donors at a Single Procurement Center

Burnett (Beau) Kelly, MD, University of Cincinnati Medical Center, Cincinnati, 3rd place, Long-term Survival in a Western Experience with Mass-forming type Cholangiocarcinoma



(L-R) Drs. Nussbaum and Robb

Trauma Award

David O'Brien, MD, University of Cincinnati Medical Center, Cincinnati, Age Predicts Outcome in Patients Following Blunt Pelvic Injury

John Peter Minton Cancer Award

George Theodoropoulos, MD, The Ohio State University Medical Center, Columbus, T-Level Downstaging and Complete Pathologic Response After Preoperative Chemoradiation for Rectal Cancer Result in Decreased Recurrence and Improved Disease-free Survival



(R) Dr. Mittendorf



(R) Dr. O'Brien

Ohio Legislative Day Recap

Ten Ohio Chapter members attended the second annual Ohio Legislative Day on Tuesday, 3 April, in Columbus. This year's event was sponsored by the Ohio State Medical Association and 16 specialty societies, including the Ohio Chapter. Total attendance was about 150 physicians. One of the top priorities this year was the passage of Senate Bill 4, the Prompt Pay Bill. Senator Larry Mumper, during a meeting last year with Ohio Chapter members, offered to sponsor the bill in the Senate when he heard OSMA legislative director Tim Maglione describe the intent of the legislation.

The day, which began with a briefing session, ended with a debriefing session and a reception in the Athletic Club for all attendees and legislators. Ohio Chapter members met for lunch between appointments and became acquainted with Jon Sutton, manager of ACS State Affairs, Health Policy and Advocacy Department, who was on hand to attend appointments and lend assistance to the Ohio Chapter effort. The program received good marks from the participants.



(L-R) Drs. Robert McDevi, Warren Muth, Sidney Miller, Michael Stark, Joseph Crowe, Jr., Ali Mokhtari, Margaret Dunn, Richard Reiling, John Raaf, and Dave Hasl

Sign-ups for the 2002 Ohio Legislative Day will take place in January after the legislative calendar is published for the spring.



2002 Annual Meeting in Akron Taking Shape

May 9–11, Crowne Plaza Quaker Square

Brian Jones, Akron, Program Chair, and David Linz, Canton, Program Cochair, have been diligently lining up the Thursday workshop and the Friday/Saturday annual meeting speakers and moderators. The workshop on Thursday, 9 May, is a hands-on course on Laparoscopic Ventral Hernia Repair. Confirmed guest faculty for the workshop include Todd Heniford and Brent Matthews of Charlotte, NC. The course will take place at

Northeastern Ohio University College of Medicine (NEOUCOM), in nearby Rootstown. The annual meeting will be held at the Crowne Plaza Quaker Square in downtown Akron on Friday and Saturday, 10–11 May. Make plans now to attend!

ACS Board of Governors: The Ohio Members, May 2001

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Membership Benefits—What Does the Ohio Chapter Do for You?

Education—Each year the Chapter sponsors a quality annual meeting, qualifying for about 12 CME credits, as well as offering a workshop on emerging surgical techniques. It sponsors a Resident Research Forum to recognize the quality research efforts of surgeons-in-training.

Advocacy—The Chapter sponsors an Ohio Legislative Day with opportunities for members to become involved in the legislative process in Columbus. It offers members the chance to participate in the

Chapter Visitation Program in Washington every other year. It provides a mechanism for meeting with other surgical subspecialty groups on issues of common concern. It provides members to subcommittees of Medical Board and Medical Society task forces, and it responds to members' reports of insurance company antics.

College Relations—The Chapter makes recommendations to the College for standing committee appointments and scholarship and award nominees. The

Chapter sponsors young surgeons and residents and candidates on College committees and at annual meetings. The Ohio Chapter is a national leader in supporting the College's scholarship and research endowment funds. The College provides assistance to the Chapter in producing this newsletter and provides start-up funds for new programs and College speakers for annual meetings. The Chapter provides opportunities for its membership to assume leadership positions on the state and national levels.

46th Annual Meeting Wrap-Up

Dr. John Preskitt, a Regent of the College from Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, TX, presented the Ohio Oration at the 46th Annual Meeting of the Ohio Chapter in Dayton in May. His topic was “ACS Chapters: Past, Present, and Future.” Dr. Preskitt cited the Ohio Chapter as being one of the most active and progressive chapters in the College. For chapters to thrive in the future, young surgeons must actively participate and take leadership roles, he said. Programs may need to change to meet the needs of the young surgeons, he added.

Dr. Sidney Miller, Dayton, was awarded the prestigious Distinguished Service Award. Dr. Miller has been active with the chapter for 25 years and served on Council for 20 years in various capacities, including President. Dr. Miller acknowledged and thanked Dr. Robert Finley as his mentor and reason for becoming involved with the Ohio Chapter.

In a slight departure from previous years, the Ohio Chapter held its annual meeting in a facility not connected to the headquarters hotel. The meeting hotel was the Dayton Marriott, while the sessions took place at Sinclair Community College’s spacious Ponitz Center in downtown Dayton. A shuttle bus provided transportation to and from the Ponitz Center for guests staying at the hotel. Holding the meeting in this fashion met with mixed reviews on the conference evaluations. While the conference facilities were deemed mostly excellent, there was some inconvenience in getting to and from the meeting. Technology was also cited as both a help and a hindrance. The good news is that more of the annual meeting speakers are utilizing the computer to make presentations; the bad news was that it took several minutes between each talk to power up. Pagers and phones were cited as a distraction. Many positive comments were received on the legislative updates provided by the College and the Ohio State Medical Association.

In all, the meeting was another success. The College presented a newly designed coding workshop to about 80 participants on Thursday, 10 May. At the same time, the Chapter and Davol, Inc., sponsored a Kugel Hernia Repair Workshop at Wright State University. On Friday, the meeting opened with a continental breakfast among 24 tabletop exhibitors. Friday evening the President’s Reception and Dinner was held at the United States Air Force Museum.

Saturday’s program opened with the Trauma Committee breakfast and a talk by Dr. David Hoyt, San Diego, Chair of the College’s Committee on Trauma, on “Missed Injuries.” Dr. Hoyt also spoke on “Vascular Injury Exposure” later that morning.

The meeting was attended by 200 surgeons, residents, vendors, and guests. A special thanks to the Ohio Chapter members who participated as speakers and moderators for the program: Sidney Miller, Dayton; Jonathan Saxe, Toledo; James Peoples, Dayton; Margaret Dunn, Dayton; Richard Nedelman, Springfield; Mark Arnold, Columbus; Brian Jones, Akron; Jeffrey Marks, Cleveland; Jill Richardson Dietz, Cleveland; R. Michael Johnson, Dayton; Michael Nussbaum, Cincinnati; Michael Stark, Toledo; James Geiger, Toledo; Jeffrey Pruitt, Defiance; Steven Steinberg, Columbus; James Hurst, Cincinnati; Joy Johannigman, Cincinnati; John Howington, Cincinnati; Gary Lemmon, Dayton; and Jeffrey Alexander, Cleveland.

The Chapter is also grateful to the following guest speakers who contributed to the program: Robert D. Kugel, Olympia, WA; Christopher Gallagher, ACS, Washington, DC; Nick Lashutka, OSMA, Columbus; John Preskitt, ACS, Baylor University Medical Center, Dallas, TX; Thomas Frank, Myriad Genetic Laboratories, Salt Lake City, UT; Ruth M. O’Regan, Northwestern University, Chicago; David B. Hoyt, ACS, University of California, San Diego; John Matsuura, Medical College of Georgia, Atlanta, GA; Michael C. Dalsing, Indiana University Medical School, Indianapolis, IN.



Dr. Hoyt, COT Chair



Dr. Kugel
 (“Kugel Hernia Repair”)

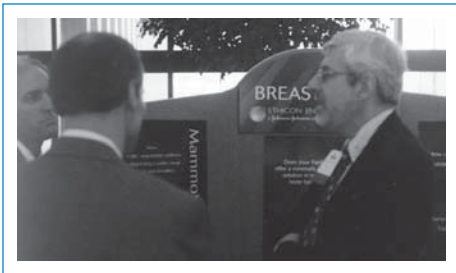


(L-R) Drs. Preskitt and Nussbaum



A Treasured trio—(L-R) Drs. Finley,
Thomford, and Miller

Scenes During the Break



Special Thanks to Our Meeting Sponsors

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Ohio Surgical Leader Returns to Boston



Dr. Josef Fischer

Dr. Josef Fischer, former President of the Ohio Chapter (1991–1992) and recipient of the Chapter’s prestigious Distinguished Service Award (1996), has accepted the challenge of chairing the surgical program at the Deaconess/Beth Israel Hospital—a Harvard teaching facility. Dr. Fischer will assume the McDermott Chair of Surgery at Harvard.

Dr. Fischer has provided extraordinary service to the surgical community of Ohio, both as the Chair at the University of Cincinnati as well as to the Ohio Chapter. He was one of the major forces in developing the Ohio Surgical Panel. Recently, after serving as the First Vice-President of the American College of Surgeons, he was elected as a Regent of the ACS, the first such person to hold that office from the State of Ohio in many years.

All of the officers, former officers, and staff at the Ohio Chapter extend our appreciation to Dr. Fischer and wish him well in his new position. We certainly will welcome his presence any time in the future, especially at the annual meeting in the spring.

Prompt Pay Bill is Signed into Law

by *Richard B. Reiling, MD, FACS, Editor*

Governor Taft signed Senate Bill 4, Prompt Pay legislation, into law on July 24. This is the result of extensive and laudatory effort on behalf of the Ohio State Medical Association and other physicians and specialty societies in Ohio, including the Ohio Chapter. Previous legislation on prompt pay has not been successful, but the new bill will put teeth into the legislation.

“The prompt pay bill is landmark legislation for the physicians of Ohio. In addition to requiring insurers to pay claims within certain time frames, the new law will also give physicians’ offices the right to refile claims and provides physicians with certain rights during ‘take back’ requests.

In addition, the prompt pay law requires insurers to adopt certain procedures, such

as the use of a standardized claim form, to make the claims-paying system easier and more efficient.

The new law, unlike the state’s previous prompt pay law, has enforcement capability written in. In addition to having to pay interest penalties on claims not paid in a timely manner, insurers will also be required to report to the Ohio Department of Insurance on their compliance efforts.” (from the OSMA)

The only problem is that the bill will not become effective until July 2002. Nevertheless, we should all be basically happy with the results, and we have Tim Maglione and his staff at the OSMA to thank for their outstanding efforts.

Attention!

Cancer Liaison Physicians

Highlights from the Commission on Cancer meetings are presented in a PowerPoint format on the ACS Web site (<http://www.facs.org/dept/cancer/index.html>). At Ohio’s request, these slides can be used at your cancer committee meetings to help explain our national direction. Look for “CoC News and Events” and then “Highlights of the 2001 CoC Spring Meeting.”

Be Sure to Check Your EOBs and Know What You Are Getting Paid

by *Richard B. Reiling, MD, FACS, Editor*

United Healthcare in the Dayton area unilaterally reduced surgical fees about 13 percent without apparent notification. Several surgeons noted a significant reduction in reimbursement for some procedures in successive reimbursement statements. A surgeon in the area indicated that he was reimbursed \$770 for a laparoscopic cholecystectomy performed in April and \$660 for the same procedure performed in May. He contacted United Healthcare and even met with the management team who informed him of the decision to reduce fees to Medicare level.

Apparently this level of reimbursement is the equal to 53 percent less than the 1992 rate. As a matter of fact, reimbursement for cholecystectomy is at about the level of what we received in 1973!!!

The key to staying on top of your reimbursements and immediately responding to such Draconian changes is to be alert to what you are being paid. A prudent surgeon and/or group of surgeons will personally oversize a billing office or service.

Editor's Note: Since writing this article, a group of 40–50 general surgeons from most of the Miami Valley's large practice groups met to discuss the pros and cons of withdrawing from United Healthcare. Besides discussing their options, the surgeons also talked about how they could do a better job of explaining their financial constraints to the public and the businessmen who pay most of the health insurance premiums. They also discussed forming a union for collective bargaining, a subject that generated little enthusiasm.

Being Heard in Washington Is Only a Click Away

by *Richard B. Reiling, MD, FACS, Editor*



The American College of Surgeon's Web site (www.facs.org) provides an easy way to contact Ohio's legislators on Capitol Hill.

On the ACS home page, click on the Legislative Action Center in the left column. By entering your zip code you will be taken to a page that identifies your Senator and Representatives. From here you can e-mail them with your own message, or you can send a message that has already been prepared, based upon issues currently under consideration.

The Legislative Action Center Web pages are easy to navigate and provide a wealth of information regarding issues, people, and resources. There is even a "how to" guide for sending personal letters and making phone calls. The ACS has provided us with a good resource so we can put our best foot forward in Washington.

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Physician Assistants Seek Legislative Extension of Their Privileges

by Richard B. Reiling, MD, FACS, Editor

The Ohio Association of Physician Assistants (OAPA) is seeking advice (SIC! Support) and eventually a sponsor for legislation to widen their scope of dependent practice. Bolstered by legislation last year to give Advanced Practice Nurses (APN) prescriptive rights, the OAPA has drafted legislative initiatives with the hope of finding support by the Ohio State Medical Association, the Ohio Chapter of the ACS, and others and subsequently finding legislative sponsors for legislation.

The OAPA has met with the OSMA and other organizations and have also offered to meet with the officers of the Ohio Chapter. The most notable request is writing prescriptions, not to include Schedule II drugs. They also propose elimination of the prohibition on a physician assistant seeing a new patient or an existing patient with a new condition. There is also a desire to eliminate the prohibition on physician assistant's administering anesthesia. This latter issue has raised considerable concern from the OSMA committee evaluating the OAPA's requests.

The OAPA argues that the changes are needed to be competitive with the APNs and especially to provide services in underserved communities within Ohio. The latter is true, but will the new legislation, if indeed passed, encourage PAs to respond to these under-served communities? The Chapter needs to know of your interests and support or lack thereof of any impending legislation of this type. The practice of medicine is again at stake!

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