

Colorado “Cardiologist for a Day” Events Forge Relationships with Lawmakers

By M. Eugene Sherman, M.D., F.A.C.C.

The ACC Colorado Chapter recently had the pleasure of hosting “Cardiologist for a Day” events at two cardiovascular practices in the state. The events brought together federal lawmakers, their staff and Chapter members to discuss issues of importance to the cardiovascular community and provide lawmakers and their staff with a firsthand glimpse of a day in the life of a cardiovascular specialist.

The idea of hosting a “Cardiologist for a Day” event came from the desire of one cardiovascular practice to reach out to lawmakers while they were home during the March congressional recess. Encouraged by their enthusiasm, I contacted

ACC grassroots staff for help in planning the events, and they helped jumpstart the process by drafting an invitation letter to all seven of Colorado’s U.S. House of



Representative offices. Although we were disappointed by the initial response, I used my position as Chapter governor to persuade additional offices to participate. In the end, we were able to get representatives from four of the seven offices.

The participating lawmakers and staff visited either a practice in Colorado Springs or a practice in Denver. At the Colorado Springs office, Rep. Doug Lamborn (R) met with the practice’s chief executive officer (CEO), several senior physicians, the head of imaging and an ACC staff member. During the visit, discussion tended to focus on problems with Medicare, particularly regarding issues surrounding access to care, quality of care and imaging. This meeting was especially successful because Rep. Lamborn signed on to Medicare payment legislation after meeting with us.

In Denver, three House staff members met with three cardiologists, the practice’s CEO, the president of the Arapahoe-Douglas-Elbert County Medical Society and me. The medical society president was a perfect ally for us and boosted our message about access to care issues for Medicare. He spoke of the importance of providing a positive Medicare physician payment update to maintain any semblance of access for seniors.

Lessons to Share

I learned several lessons from the “Cardiologist for a Day” events. First, don’t hesitate to involve ACC staff. The two ACC staff members with whom I worked not only helped draft the invitation, but they also helped develop messages and materials. They even followed up with the lawmakers and their staff after the event.

Second, listen to your membership. The “Cardiologist for a Day” program is a great way for Chapters and cardiovascular specialists in the state to come together on practice-level issues. If you have physicians and practice managers who want to hold a “Cardiologist for a Day” event — go for it.

Last, I learned that it’s important

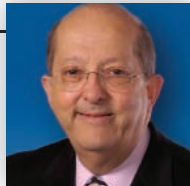
BOG Leadership Discusses 2008 Priorities

By Jane Schauer, M.D., Ph.D., F.A.C.C.

to be organized and for the chapter governor to be involved. These events were successful in part because we had such an organized program. Our organization enabled us to persuade several House offices to attend the event, which in turn pressured other offices to come. Through my position as governor, I was able to further persuade offices to participate.

Overall, our “Cardiologist for the Day” events were incredibly successful. We were able to build long-lasting relationships with our federal lawmakers, and we succeeded in showing them what issues matter to the cardiovascular community and why those issues should matter to them. In addition, the event invigorated our members and showed them the power of political involvement. I highly recommend that chapters interested in presenting their issues to lawmakers hold a “Cardiologist for a Day” event in their state.

Sherman is governor of the ACC's Colorado Chapter and a practicing cardiologist in Aurora and Englewood, Colo.



Interested in hosting a “Cardiologist for a Day” event for your chapter? The ACC has materials to help you plan the event, available at www.acc.org/OSCAR, including sample invitations and agendas and recommendations on how to make your event a success.

In addition, you can contact mnichels@acc.org or jbeland@acc.org.



In May, the leadership of the Board of Governors (BOG) met to discuss its 2008 – 2009 initiatives at Heart House in Washington, D.C. Immediate Past Chair **George Rodgers, M.D., F.A.C.C.**; incoming BOG Chair **John Harold, M.D., F.A.C.C.**; and I reviewed the 2007 – 2008 priorities and determined how best to move forward based on feedback we received from the BOG.

The BOG is focused on four themes: membership, advocacy, international and professionalism. For 2007 – 2008, strengthening chapters and building strong organizational foundations was a major BOG priority. In 2008 – 2009, we hope to build on this foundation by focusing on the individual chapter member. Steps to improve membership value include enhancing communication between the BOG and members and continuing to increase the involvement of CCAs, FITs and Practice Administrators in chapter activities. The BOG is focused on ensuring that chapters are a valuable resource for each and every member.

Given the critical nature of national and state advocacy, governors will work with chapters to take a larger leadership role in policy discussions. To accomplish this, they will —

- hold state-to-state discussions among BOG members about local issues and efforts
- increase PAC fundraising
- continue to build strong relationships with legislators
- reinstitute the BOG subcommittee on state advocacy.

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the BOG will work to harness synergy between the

Governors and the International Committee and foster relationships with international cardiovascular societies. The BOG will also work with the International Governance Task Force to determine the best ways to incorporate this important membership group into the ACC governance structure.

As national attention and debate on physicians and our health care system continues to increase, the BOG strives to be a thought leader for the medical professional and cardiovascular care. Our efforts will involve continuous promotion of the patient-physician relationship, advocacy for greater transparency in the health care industry and a continuous stress on professionalism.

The opportunities for both the BOG and individual chapters are exciting and challenging. Success with these initiatives is well within our reach, and the ACC provides many tools to assist us, including national funding available through the National Funding Proposal (NFP). Governors may use the grants to develop new programs that focus on various themes such as membership and workforce issues; roundtables and networking events; community service; health information technology (HIT); quality; and, of course, international, advocacy and professionalism initiatives. Contact your governor with your great idea for your state, chapter or even region! ACC has \$250,000 worth of grants available to distribute.

For more information about the BOG priorities or tools available to chapters, please contact Helen Smith at hsmith@acc.org.

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