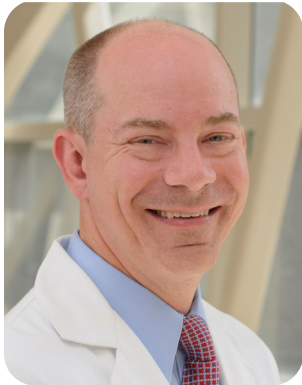


# the PA Internist

SPRING 2020



## GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS



### Dear Colleagues,

I hope this newsletter finds you safe and healthy. I speak for all of the PA-ACP governors when I say we are extremely grateful to our members and healthcare teams for providing care to patients during the COVID-19 crisis. It is shocking to all of us to see how the crisis has

unfolded over the past few weeks and know that it is going to be a stressful marathon. Areas of our Chapter will experience this pandemic in different ways and on variable timelines but we are all in this together.

Information is coming at you from all angles, and there isn't much time to process it while we are in the thick of things, but I want you to know that PA-ACP is here for you. The pages of this newsletter will give you information on some of the latest issues going on in Pennsylvania, actions taken at the national and state level on your behalf and that of patients, along with resources and links to keep you up-to-date through the CDC, PA-ACP website, and ACP.

While it may be difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel, I also want to ensure you that your medical society "home" is looking toward the future for you. In addition to the resources you will find in these pages, you will find information about upcoming events and non-COVID-19 related resources. Check them out – look toward the future for a few minutes with us.



### Getting Through This Together

We will get through this together, and we will be better physicians for it. Personally, I have never been more proud to be a physician, and an internist. Lean on your colleagues and your families. Stay safe and healthy, physically AND mentally. Please remember to take care of yourself and give yourself some time to relax, reflect and regenerate. I look forward to reuniting as a chapter as soon as it is possible to do so. Hopefully by the time we hold our fall Annual Scientific Meeting, this will all be (for the most part) in our rearview mirrors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Lawrence Ward'.

Lawrence Ward, MD, MPH, FACP  
Governor, Southeastern PA-ACP  
President, PA-ACP 501(c)3

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS | PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER

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*PA-ACP's work for you, your practices and your patients in Harrisburg is more complicated right now because of COVID-19, daily decisions regarding state responses to the pandemic, and with the dispersion of legislators and executive branch personnel from Capitol offices. But having feet on the ground, and knowing the people and*

*pathways has become more important than ever.*

*In the meantime, we are providing daily updates on data, news and information that can be helpful to you on our website (at <https://www.pa-ACP.org>) on Twitter @PACchapterACP and on our Facebook page (PA Chapter, American College of Physicians.) We strongly encourage you to check these sources on a regular basis for updates and information relating to response to COVID-19 and other important legislative and*

*There's an old saying that will be particularly true in the months ahead: chaos is opportunity. There will be many more critical decisions forced by COVID-19, and landmark legislation ahead – probably some good news, and a little not so good. But PA-ACP will continue to be at the table in Harrisburg fighting for you.*

### ADVOCACY IN A PANDEMIC

“What have you done for me lately?” is a fair question at any time, but it's particularly germane in a time of crisis.

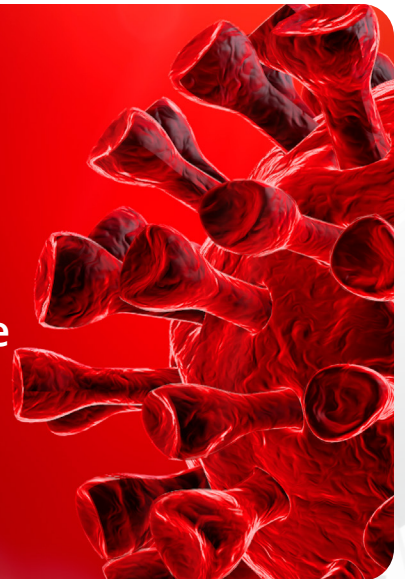
The ACP has taken the lead nationally in fighting for frontline physicians and their patients - in Congress, with the DHHS, CMS and other federal agencies. We are proud to support the College's efforts on an ongoing basis, and you can be as well. Our thanks to those of you who, through the Advocates for Internal Medicine network, have joined in the College's efforts.

At the state level, the PA-ACP has also taken a leading role in working with state government and the General Assembly, pushing for needed guidance, reforms, and changes to allow our practices and facilities to deal with the novel coronavirus and continue providing necessary health care to all Pennsylvanians now and in the future.

First and perhaps foremost, PA-ACP is providing a [daily update](#) for members on state data, programs available to them, policy changes, and new guidance documents on the Chapter website. The Chapter's [Twitter](#) account also posts information and updates in real time, as does the Chapter [Facebook](#) page.

Direct advocacy efforts are ongoing on a daily basis. In the last month alone, PA-ACP has, on its own and working with coalitions of primary care, health care and patient advocacy groups, has pushed for many state actions while supporting and advocating the ACP's efforts with the state's Congressional delegation.

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### Some examples:

In mid-March, PA-ACP urged the Wolf Administration to seek a presidential national emergency declaration for the Commonwealth, opening doors for additional federal support. That designation was approved in early April.

PA-ACP lobbied for use of telemedicine with both new and established patients, and for parity in reimbursements to practitioners for those services, a program accepted by CMS, and the state's oversight agencies for Medicare, Medicaid and the CHIP program. PA-ACP recognized that telehealth care is critical to maintaining and protecting our patients' health at this time.

continued on next page



The Chapter has had focused discussions with the state and legislative leadership to ensure that independent and small group physician practices get the financial support they need, get sufficient PPE and testing kits. That advocacy is ongoing.

We have asked that prior authorization for ongoing care and treatment of existing patients and for prescription of generic drugs be waived during the emergency declaration to free up time for patient care, helping keep patients out of the hospitals and saving needed beds.

PA-ACP pushed for and got inclusion of physician practices as eligible for all state and federally funded grants and forgivable loans for small businesses, noting the severity of the increased costs and reduced revenue being experienced by physicians on the frontlines of patient care.

PA-ACP, along with the ACP, successfully advocated waiving cost sharing for families in dealing with COVID-19.

In the General Assembly, we have advocated for strict social distancing, advising legislative leaders that this is not the time to relax those provisions, and that

changing standards and guidance should be evidence-driven. We have also advocated for legislation that protects physician practices and other small businesses from economic losses because business interruption insurance often has provisions absolving the insurer from payments for virus-related shutdowns.

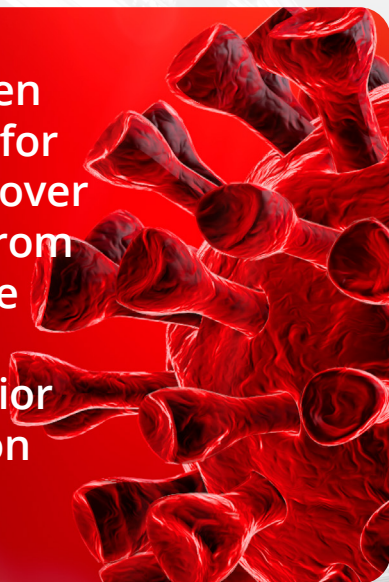
We have been at the table for discussions over legislation from telemedicine to balance billing, to prior authorization reform. These bills have taken on new meanings in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. We expect action on all these fronts in the coming months, and PA-ACP will continue to press for policies that help members better provide patient care.

On the legal front, PA-ACP joined in asking the Courts to postpone depositions and discovery in medical malpractice lawsuits until after the pandemic is under control, to preserve physicians time for patient care.

And most recently, PA-ACP has called on the Governor and General Assembly to provide limited civil immunity from lawsuits, similar to the state's good Samaritan act, for physicians and other health care practitioners during the COVID-19 emergency declaration. While our members are putting their safety and their lives on the line daily in dealing with COVID-19 patients, the last thing that they should have to worry about is looking over their shoulders to see medical malpractice lawsuits during a unique pandemic situation.

Advocacy is not just limited to legislation – the COVID-19 emergency has underscored that fact. Don't forget to get a [daily update](#) from the Chapter Website, and while you're on the site, sign up as a [Keystone Contact](#), and add your voice to the Chapter's in becoming an advocacy resource for your local elected officials!

**We have been at the table for discussions over legislation from telemedicine to balance billing, to prior authorization reform.**



# NEW WESTERN REGION GOVERNOR

STAY CURRENT  
STAY INFORMED



## Meet your new PA-ACP Western Region Governor!

**Melissa McNeil, MD, MACP** begins her role as the Western Region Governor and PA-ACP and PA-ACP Services Treasurer this month. We thank Thomas Grau for leading the Western Region and PA Chapter over the past few years.

With this change, Lawrence Ward, MD, MPH, FACP Southeastern Region Governor becomes the PA-ACP President and Lawrence Jones, MD, FACP becomes the PA-ACP Vice President.

## COVID-19 RESOURCES

Over the past month or so, COVID-19 has turned the world, not just the medical field, on its head. Businesses are trying to figure out how to adjust their services and reach out to their customers, members, and users. Information is being pushed out at lightning speed and it can be difficult to manage it all.

As physicians, your workload has probably increased in addition to needing to navigate this influx of information. Here are some quick links to provide you with easy to find information pertinent to you:

- [ACP Practice Management Resources](#)
  - [Telehealth Coding and Billing](#)
  - [Payer Policies](#)
  - [Practice Financial & Management Issues](#)
  - [ACP COVID-19 Related Advocacy](#)
- [ACP Clinical Information for Internists](#)
- [PA-ACP Daily Updates & Resources](#)
- [Pennsylvania Department of Health Resources](#)

## WEBSITE HIGHLIGHTS

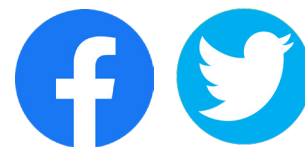
Join the PA-ACP

**Speakers' Bureau!**

Find out more about  
advocacy with the PA-ACP

**Advocacy Podcasts!**

Follow us on social media!





## UPCOMING EVENTS & MUCH MORE!

STAY CURRENT  
STAY INFORMED

### Look Forward to the fall with PA-ACP!

#### **Western Poster Competition & Doctor's Dilemma®**

**October 17, 2020**

West Penn Hospital

#### **Southeastern Poster Competition & Doctor's Dilemma®**

**October 24, 2020**

Thomas Jefferson University –  
Hamilton Building

#### **Eastern Poster Competition & Doctor's Dilemma®**

**October 31, 2020**

Crowne Plaza – Harrisburg, PA

#### **Annual Scientific Meeting & Awards Luncheon**

**November 14, 2020**

Best Western Premier, the  
Central Hotel – Harrisburg, PA

[Click Here for More Information!](#)

**Stay tuned for additional chapter events!**

[Click Here for More Information!](#)

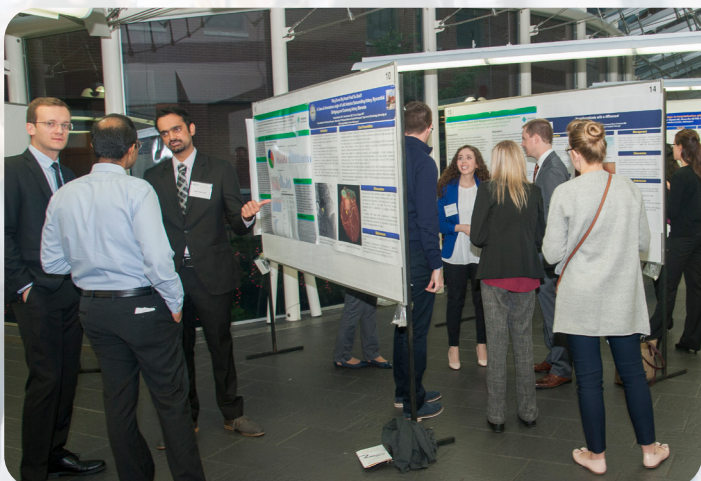
### 2019 MEETING PHOTOS!



*2019 PA-ACP Award Recipients*



*Doctor's Dilemma State Winners - Allegheny Health Network*



*Western Region Residents show their posters at the PAW Poster Competition*