



American Hospital Association

HIGHLIGHTS
GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING
 AHA Section for Small or Rural Hospitals
 March 21-22, 2013 ★ Chicago, IL



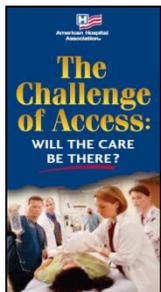
The governing council of the AHA Section for Small or Rural hospitals met March 21-22, 2013 in Chicago, IL. Governing council members were updated on the political environment and received reports on sequester, federal budget and deficit reduction, AHA’s advocacy agenda and regulatory policy. They discussed in depth Medicare and Medicaid entitlement reform, gun violence, immigration and health care coverage, the area wage index, and quality and performance improvement. A **roster of the Section’s governing council** is available on our Web site.



Washington Update: Members examined the political environment, the federal budget deficit and the fiscal road map for funding the federal government. Members discussed the effects of sequester and its implications for hospitals. They reviewed and discussed setting the record straight regarding transparency in hospital billing. Members reviewed AHA’s advocacy agenda for rural hospitals and the viability of Medicare payment extenders. Members endorsed the importance of the **AHAPAC** and the work of the **Coalition to Protect America’s Health Care** to communicate our message to the public.

Fiscal Roadmap 

Critical Points On This Year’s Fiscal Calendar



Members were briefed on a robust list of regulatory policies that implement routine Medicare payment updates as well as rules for health care reform. Regulatory policy issues of particular interest included proposed changes in Medicare conditions of participation for hospitals and critical access hospitals, implementing Medicare payment adjustments, direct supervision of outpatient therapeutic services, and outpatient therapy caps. Members reviewed the timeline for meaningful use of electronic health records and achieving stage 2 and commented on the costly RAC audit process.

Ensuring a Healthier Tomorrow: The AHA Board approved a policy paper “*Ensuring a Healthier Tomorrow*” that represents a compilation of 2012 governance and policy development discussions on debt and deficit reduction and entitlement reform. It describes the looming crisis confronting the financial sustainability of the Medicare and Medicaid programs and the strategies that can be adopted by various stakeholders to both improve the quality and safety of the health care system while eliminating inefficiency and reducing costs. Twelve specific recommendations in the paper and summarized in the brochure are supported by a list of suggested actions for each group of stakeholders to take. Members received an overview of the paper’s 12 recommendations and shared results of their discussions with hospital leaders and identified priorities for the AHA to pursue.

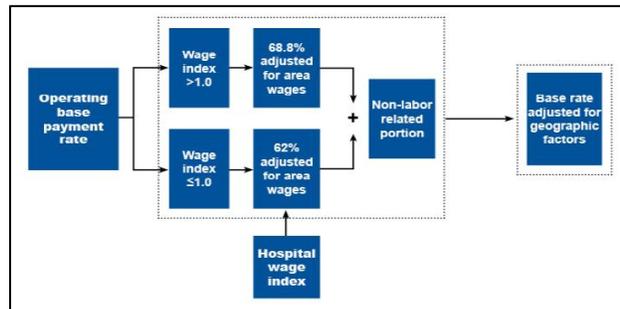
Ensuring a Healthier Tomorrow 

Actions to Strengthen Our Health Care System and Our Nation’s Finances

Health Care Dimension of the Gun Debate: Hospitals and health care providers are often at the center of gun violence by treating the wounded and keeping patients, visitors, employees and families safe. To date, the AHA has not adopted a formal position or formulated an advocacy agenda specifically on the health care dimensions of gun violence. Council members explored and discussed issues that hospital and health care system providers care most about, actions being taken to reduce gun violence, and the role – if any – the AHA should take in the emerging national debate.

Area Wage Index Task Force Report:

Since mid-2011, the AHA’s governance and policy development groups have held numerous discussions on the work of the AHA task force charged with examining issues around the Medicare Area Wage Index. At its November meeting, the AHA Board of Trustees accepted the task force’s report and began consideration of how best to educate the field on the issues and share the report with policymakers. The impact of the recommendation was modeled for hospital-specific and state-level impacts compared to FY 2013 AWIs and operating payments and shared with members for their consideration.



Immigration and Health Care Coverage: As congressional leaders and the Administration are considering immigration reform, the AHA’s governance and policy development groups were asked to take a broad look at the intersection of health coverage and employment with immigration reform. Council members reviewed, discussed, and commented on key immigration principles relating to: (1) immigrant health care coverage, and (2) visa opportunities for health care professionals as part of comprehensive immigration reform.

Quality and Performance Improvement: The proposition of a value-based payment system demands accelerating quality and performance improvement of clinical outcomes and care practices. The governing council focused attention on how community hospitals can enhance value and transform health care for rural populations.



Join your colleagues April 28- May 1 in Washington, D.C., at the 2013 AHA Annual Membership Meeting to hear the latest on the forces effecting health care, and to take hospitals' message to Capitol Hill. The meeting includes keynote speeches from prominent policy makers, the annual breakfast meeting for constituencies, executive briefings on important health topics, ACHE credits, and a special briefing for small or rural hospitals. You may [register](#) on line.

For more information about the topics covered in these highlights or on the [AHA Section for Small or Rural Hospitals](#), contact John T. Supplitt, senior director, at 312-422-3306 or jsupplitt@aha.org.