



GEORGIA OSTEOPATHIC
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
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GOMA News & Updates

Volume 36, March 2022

Welcome to GOMA's monthly newsletter where you can stay up-to-date on the latest osteopathic news and happenings in the GOMA community.

GOMA Happy to Announce Fix to Attestation Problem Fixed in New Budget

In 2013, Georgia Medicaid rates were increased up to Medicare reimbursement rates if doctors had appropriate electronic medical record system and they attested to being primary care physicians. In 2015, there was a window to re-attest as to being a primary care physician. Unfortunately, a number of physicians did not sign the paperwork in 2013. The 2015 window was not open to new attestations, but only re-attestations. Doctors who have started practice in Georgia after 2013 benefitted from the higher Medicaid rates. Georgia's amended 2021 budget includes \$85 million for the alleviation of the attestation requirement. It will result in primary care physicians and



specialists getting higher reimbursement rates to equal Medicare rates. Karen Turner, DO, GOMA's representative to the Patient-Centered Physicians Coalition has been a major advocate for his fix. Thank her next time you see her.

Patient-Centered Physicians Coalition of Georgia Day at the Capitol



On Thursday March 3rd, Karen Turner, DO led a group from the Georgia Osteopathic Medical Association at the “Day at the Capitol” held by Patient-Centered Physicians Coalition of Georgia (PCPC). Over the four hours, leaders from GOMA, Georgia Academy of Family Practice, Georgia Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, Georgia Chapter of American College of Physicians and Georgia OB-GYN Society listened to guest speakers and legislators in the Empire Room of the Floyd Veterans Memorial Building across for the Georgia Capitol. Pictured above (left to right) are: Michael Baron, DO (Past President); Karen Turner, DO (Immediate Past President) ; Randy Durbin, DO (President) & Betsy Hilt, CAE (Executive Director). Due to COVID-19, each group was not allowed to have more than five representatives this year.

The first speaker was Megan Andrews, JD who serves as the Assistant Commissioner for Policy of the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). Her boss is Kathleen Toomey, MD. They have been working to lobby for multiple bills that they feel have major health consequences. **HB 1348** is an effort to update the definitions for the 2005 Smoke Free Air Act to add vaping to the list of smoke producers forbidden in public buildings. **HB 1355** is a proposal to update the blood levels of lead to be considered harmful. Currently, the blood lead reference value (BLRV) in Georgia is 15 mcg/dL is considered high, but the bill will make

Georgia's BLRV consistent with the newest guidelines of the CDC which is 3.5 mcg/dL. Once that level is surpassed, the government will be triggered to identify the source and educate the parents. **SB 539** is another bill that the DPH is lobbying in support of. SB 539 would protect patients' privacy in medical waiting rooms by making it criminal to record or photograph patients in the waiting room. There will be an exception allowed for medical providers to have security cameras. **SB 404** has advanced to the House and updates the licensing and background checks of EMTs to link it with a wrap back program which would notify DPH if there is a federal offense. Lastly, Ms. Andrews expressed concern about **SB 514** that takes away requirements for masks, but stated that she had heard that legislators had altered the bill so that it would still be required for COVID-19 patients who are within two weeks of recuperation from the infection.

The next speaker was Ryan Loke who serves under Rick Nigel as the Deputy Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH). The DCH is in charge of Medicaid which Mr. Loke stated has an \$18 billion budget. He stated that due to extension of Federal Health Emergency measures there are 2.6 million members on Medicaid. 1.8 million of the members are enrolled in a managed care plan. 1.5 million of the members are under age 18 years. Mr. Loke discussed efforts to improve quality, transparency and accountability. He stated that the Federal authorities have guaranteed a sixty day notification of when emergency measures no longer apply and would allow DCH to decrease the number of members.

The last guest speaker was Gregg Conley, JD who serves under Insurance Commissioner John King as the Executive Counsel of the Office of the Insurance Commissioner. Mr. Conley spoke about monitoring insurance companies including carve outs, rates of premiums and complaints from patients and providers. He stated that ERISA plans do not come under his review but Affordable Care Act plans and

Small Group insurance plans are under his office's review. He states that calling Consumer Services Division at 404-656-2070 is best for patients and providers. Lately, many calls have come in regarding surprise billing. He was clear that physicians need to make sure they completely respond to any complaints including claim work and supporting documentation in order for the arbitration to be done in a timely fashion. Mr. Conley repeatedly pointed out that his office is not for general billing disputes, but that if there is pattern of insurance companies improperly handling claims that it requires a significant number of physicians showing the same pattern before his office will trigger an investigation.

A half dozen legislators came for lunch and to update the physicians about bills. Rep. Sharon Cooper, RN (R) of Marietta is the head of the Health and Human Services Committee. She was happy to announce that the postpartum extension of Medicaid coverage from 6 months to 12 months is on track to become law which resulted in loud applause. Additionally, she felt optimistic about the bill to make donor breast milk covered by Medicaid as well as a bill to make vaccine counseling a reimbursable service even if the patient does not get the vaccine. Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver (D) from Decatur discussed working in a bipartisan fashion with Rep. Todd Jones (R) of Forsyth County to lead **HB 1013** through the legislature. This mental health omnibus bill enforces parity for mental health services with medical services. It has been financed with \$120 million. There are many facets of the bill, but Rep. Oliver explained that medical loss (spending) ratios (MLR) have been outliers for insurance companies and this bill dictates a new way to calculate MLR indicating that 85% has to be direct medical services. She stated that insurance companies have been spending \$176 million less than that on mental health. The bill includes loan forgiveness for MDs and DOs who practice in underserved areas and accept Medicare and Medicaid. The bill will track repeat psychiatric crisis

cases that present to emergency rooms to address the underlying issues. The bill will allow flexibility in transporting psychiatric crisis cases so that it doesn't have to be the Sheriff. There is language that makes the psychiatric formulary to be from one entity which will become effective in 2023. Rep. Katie Dempsey (R) from Rome spoke about the benefits of the bipartisan lead blood level bill. Rep. Teri Anulewicz (D) from Smyrna discussed mature minor consent for vaccinations so that children over the age of 16 years can provide consent for their own vaccinations.

At the end of the session, all the groups were optimistic about this year's health legislature.

EVENING PROGRAM PCPC: Legislative Day Wednesday, March 9

Since March 3rd had limited attendance, the Patient Centered Physicians' Coalition of Georgia (PCPC) is holding a virtual Legislative Advocacy Webinar on Wednesday, March 9, 2022, from 6 to 7:30 pm. All osteopathic



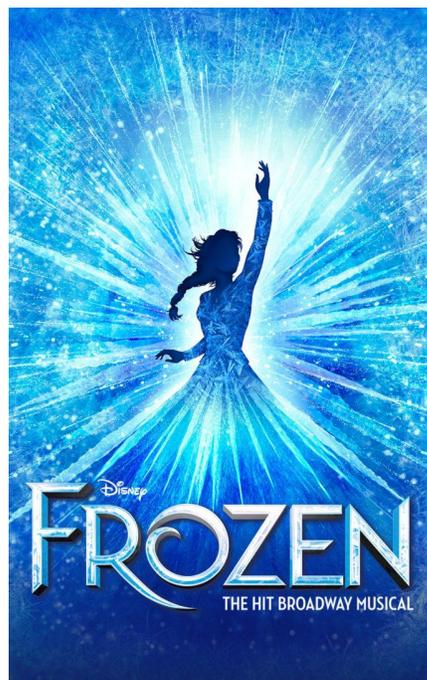
physicians are encouraged to attend. You can expect to hear from physicians who are members of the Georgia General Assembly and their unique views on how healthcare policy is shaped at the Gold Dome. Additionally, we'll learn from reporters how they approach the subject of healthcare issues for their audiences. This is a free event and it will help you understand in more depth some of the legislation mentioned above. To register go to:

<https://goma.org/advocacy>.

DRAWING FOR MEMBERS Broadway Shows at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta



GOMA has a special raffle for new or renewing members who have paid their 2022 dues – Atlanta’s Fox Theatre Broadway Series tickets. Four evening show tickets in the orchestra section to **Jesus Christ Superstar** on Saturday Apr 23, 2022 which will be picked amongst doctors who have paid their dues by March 31st; and another drawing for four similar tickets to **Disney’s Frozen** on Saturday Jun 11, 2022 which will be picked



amongst doctors who have paid their dues by April 30th.

In other words, doctors who sign up for membership early get two chances to win tickets to crowd pleasing family friendly musicals. The Fox Theatre requires masks to be worn by all attendees for safety.

*Make your family happy by **renewing your GOMA membership** and winning four tickets to a fun evenings.*

3G Service Being Shut Down & 5G Interfering with Pacemakers

As telecom companies rev up the newest generation of mobile services, called 5G, they're shutting down old networks – a costly, years-in-the-works process that's now prompting calls for a delay because many products out there still rely on the old standard, 3G. For the carriers, shutting down 3 G is an efficiency move. Shutting off outdated networks and use the freed-up bandwidth for newer and more profitable services.

Home-alarms, older phones, ankle bracelets used by law enforcement may all be affected. AARP, the advocacy group for adults over 50, is also concerned that users of medical alert systems – those necklaces and bracelets, like Life Alert – that connect users to emergency call centers won't know their gadgets don't work anymore or won't be able to replace them in time. Zonar, which provides GPS and other services for buses and trucks, says tens of thousands of vehicles will potentially be affected.

Meanwhile, newer products have their own issues. Magnets in some newer smartphones and smartwatches could affect the function of implanted devices such as pacemakers and cardiac defibrillators, recent research in the October 2021 Heart Rhythm suggests. To prevent those problems, keep those electronics at least 6 inches away from medical devices.

Magnets in portable electronic devices (PEDs) may interfere with cardiovascular implantable devices (CIEDs) according to a research letter published in *Circulations: Arrhythmia and Electrophysiology*. Study researchers “found that the farthest point where a 10G intensity has been measured is located about 20 mm and 29 mm from the surface for all displayed Apple products and for the Microsoft Surface Pen, respectively. At a distance between 8 mm and 18 mm, magnet reversion mode was triggered for the tested PEDs.” Researchers wrote, “Our study found that PEDs other than the iPhone 12 have

magnetic susceptibility and, thus, have the potential to inhibit lifesaving therapies.”

This is a good time for having your patients do a review and contact their providers to make sure they have technology that will work before the emergency need arises.

Goodbye Dr. E. & Hello Dr. T.



Walter C. Ehrenfeuchter, DO retired from the faculty of PCOM Georgia at the end of 2021. On March 1, 2022, the Board of Trustees of PCOM accepted the recommendation of the Appointment, Promotion and Tenure Committee to award “Dr. E.” the status of Professor Emeritus.



Victoria A. Troncoso, DO, has been appointed Professor and Chair of Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine (OMM) at PCOM Georgia. In this position, Dr. Troncoso will oversee the OMM department and direct all aspects of the OMM educational program for students, faculty and staff. Dr. Troncoso is already serving in the position, but has not relocated from Arizona yet.

Learn more about Dr. Troncoso and her passion for osteopathic medicine: <https://bit.ly/3dKI20L>

Farrell Tobolowsky, DO: Preparing for Global Health Threats

Congratulations to Farrell



A. Tobolowsky, DO who started this past fall in the highly sought after CDC Future Leaders in Infections and Global Health Threats (FLIGHT) fellowship. The FLIGHT program is in its third year of existence and was designed to develop leaders who will guide global workforces to prepare and respond to global public health threats.

Dr. Tobolowsky received her D.O. degree from the University of North Texas in 2014. She completed an internal medicine at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston in 2017, and went on to an infectious disease fellowship at the University of Colorado in Denver which finished in 2019. Dr. Tobolowsky recently was the lead author in a prospective longitudinal study that focused on nursing home populations from October 2020 to April 2021 evaluating the quantitative titers and durability of finding antibodies detected after SARS-CoV-2 infection and subsequent COVID-19 vaccination.

Gregory Harris, DO Serves on Board of Oncology Society



Congratulations to Gregory Harris, DO of the Harbin Clinic in Rome, Georgia for being selected to serve on the Executive Board of the Georgia Society of Clinical Oncology (GASCO). Dr. Harris continues to serve as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Georgia Osteopathic Medical Association.

Tell Congress to Make Telehealth Permanent

The success of telehealth adoption during the pandemic makes it clear that Medicare telehealth benefits should remain available to patients after the current COVID-19 public health emergency ends. However, unless Congress acts, most Medicare beneficiaries will abruptly lose access to these services due to the current Medicare “originating site” and geographic restrictions under 1834 M of the Social Security Act, that immediately snap back into effect upon conclusion of the public health emergency.

Please contact your Senators and member of Congress and ask them to support making expanded telehealth permanent. Ask them to support legislation that would permanently repeal the Medicare telehealth geographic restrictions and alter the originating site requirements so patients can obtain virtual care anywhere they can access a telecommunications system, including , but not limited to, the home. Congress can ensure patients can continue to access Medicare telehealth services regardless of where they are located and build upon the progress that increased telehealth coverage has shown in expanding access to care.



PCOM South Georgia Peers Helping First Generation Medical Students

PCOM South Georgia's student-led First Generation Committee seeks to provide support, encouragement and guidance to students who are the first in their families to attend college or professional school. These students recognize that being the first in their family to advance in their academic career means facing challenges that their peers may not experience – and they want to help others through those same challenges. [Read about their individual journeys which have led them to where they are today.](#)

PCOM South Georgia Student Doctor Samuel Prahlow is Researcher of the Year

PCOM South Georgia osteopathic student Samuel Prahlow (DO '24) has been selected as PCOM South Georgia's Student Researcher of the Year! With this nomination, Prahlow will be competing for the National Student Researcher of the Year Award. [Click here to check out his research accomplishments and why faculty members say he's the perfect candidate.](#)



GA-PCOM Students Serve Community

PCOM Georgia students are always looking for opportunities to care for, educate and assist individuals in the community, and the College is committed to helping students in their outreach. The President's Community Wellness Initiative supports student-led projects and fosters cross-campus collaboration to create, plan, and execute new opportunities that serve the communities of all three PCOM locations. [Learn more about how PCOM is prioritizing patient care, health and wellness education, and research efforts in the community.](#)

As Valentine's Day approached twenty five students from PCOM Georgia went to the Mall of Georgia, but not to shop for gifts, but rather to train community members in the Basic 2 Step CPR. The 5 minute training has been proven to save lives.

In other words...

From American Poet John Ciardi in the *Saturday Review*
November 18, 1968 a poem titled,

Lines From the Beating End of the Stethoscope

I speak, as I say, the patient's point of view.
But, given time, doctors are patients, too.
And there's our bond: beyond anatomy,
Or in it, through it, to the mystery
Medicine takes the pulse of and lets go
Forever unexplained. It's art, we know,
Not science at the heart. Doctor be whole,
I won't insist the patient is a soul,
But he's a something, possibly laughable,
Or possibly subline, but not quite graphable.
Not quite containable on a bed chart.
Where science touches man it turns to art.



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Support GOMA!

*Help your professional society as it
helps advocate for your and all of
Georgia's licensed DOs.*

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