Fellow Colorado Physician Anesthesiologists;

How do you feel about the level of compensation for anesthesiology services received from Colorado Medicaid or from Medicare?

If you think that it is adequate or maybe even above market value, then read no further. However; if, like me and the Government Accounting Office, you know that the conversion rates for anesthesia care are very much inadequate, then it is time to join the Colorado Society of Anesthesiologists Executive Board as well as your enlightened colleagues and contribute to the Committee for Physician Anesthesia Care (CPAC) and the small Donor Fund. CPAC is the political action committee of the CSA, and is very low on funds. We have a daunting task ahead of us this legislative session, and your Board and our professional lobby team need the tools to work effectively for YOU! How, you may ask?

In 2015 CSA was successful in enacting legislation that provided for a $4 million targeted increase in Medicaid anesthesia rates. However; close follow-up by our state ASA Director discovered that the legislated increase was never fully implemented, and when the Colorado Health Care Policy and Finance Administration was challenged, attempts at full accounting of the funds were rebuffed and never clearly revealed.

Separately, a commission to examine and evaluate Medicaid rates for all medical services was established by the state, and our own Past President Murray Willis sat as a member. A policy to roll back the anesthesia rate increase was pushed by other physicians of the commission (who, you will be interested to know, were representatives of the Colorado Medical Society). Not only that, but the benchmark proposed for setting rates was Medicare! Murray resisted these efforts, suggesting more reasonable benchmarks such as Workman’s Comp and presenting the GAO report concluding there is a 33% undervaluation of anesthesia services by Medicare, but he was ignored. Members of your CSA board including Murray went to Colorado Medical Society leadership to present the problem and get the more reasonable benchmarks accepted, but the fix was in, and they were unwilling to compromise with us.

Therefore; it falls to us to again directly approach legislators to introduce and pass a bill to solve the problem of inadequate compensation for anesthesia services. We will be fighting the HCPF administration who is already disturbed by our demands for accountability of the previous rate increase. This will be a heavy lift, but is necessary. The board cannot do it alone. Everyone who bills for anesthesia services stands to benefit from this endeavor, and everyone must participate. It is easy peasy to write a check to the CPAC and Small Donor Fund to give your lobby team the tools to get our message across to our friends in the legislature. It is also easy to send support to the CSA members who hold fundraisers for lawmakers friendly to our issues.

Lest you think that the CPAC is partisan, last year the committee contributed nearly equal amounts to both sides of the aisle. We need friends on both sides because no one party can get a bill passed by itself. We support lawmakers of both parties who support us.

Consider this a business expense, because your livelihood does depend on it. You cannot sit on the sidelines. “I don’t get involved in politics” won’t work because, as you see, politics is very much interested and involved with you and your profession. Inaction on your part only aids and abets their efforts to unfairly compensate anesthesia. Write those checks today! We need to start work now!

Sincerely,



Daniel Janik, MD