



The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

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March 7, 2016

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro,

On behalf of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS), I am pleased to nominate Jeffrey B. Rich, MD to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC). As a cardiothoracic surgeon, Director of the Virginia Cardiac Surgery Quality Initiative (VCSQI), and Past President of STS, Dr. Rich has demonstrated a profound dedication to advancing the practice of medicine. He is an exceptional candidate for MedPAC because of his unique expertise in Medicare payment and quality improvement policy as a former Director of the Center for Medicare Management and as a former member of the Board of Directors for the National Quality Forum (NQF).

Founded in 1964, STS is an international not-for-profit organization representing more than 7,000 cardiothoracic surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals in 90 countries who are dedicated to ensuring the best surgical care for patients with diseases of the heart, lungs, and other organs in the chest. The mission of the Society is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research, and advocacy.

Dr. Rich's leadership roles reflect his extensive knowledge of the U.S. health care system and demonstrate his expertise in both quality improvement and health care economics. As Director of the Center for Medicare Management, he oversaw the regulation and payment of Medicare fee-for-service providers, privately administered Medicare health plans, and the Medicare prescription drug program. At NQF, he served as Chair of the Council on Research and Quality Improvement, where members are engaged in the everyday measurement, evaluation, and research of quality in health care.

During Dr. Rich's tenure as STS President, he oversaw unprecedented collaboration among the Society, the American College of Cardiology (ACC), the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. This effort broke new ground in health policy, pioneering the FDA/CMS parallel review process for a transformative medical device, and launching the groundbreaking STS/ACC Registry™ for transcatheter valve therapy devices.

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Dr. Rich trained at Massachusetts General Hospital, which is the teaching institution for Harvard medical school, transitioned to Stanford University Hospital, and then began his practice in Virginia. It was in Virginia that he applied his robust health care knowledge as a founding member and Director of the VCSQI, a voluntary regional collaborative in the Commonwealth of Virginia that is comprised of 14 cardiac surgical practices and 18 hospitals. The VCSQI is demonstrating that improving quality will reduce costs through the creation of evidence-based protocols using patients' clinical information matched with administrative and cost data. Additionally, Dr. Rich has testified before Congress on numerous occasions, most recently in the summer of 2013, to describe the critical role of the STS National Database and other clinical registries in payment system reform. Through his work with STS and VSCQI, Dr. Rich has proven that an interdisciplinary, team-based approach to providing the best quality patient care is the most efficacious way to reduce costs and enhance patient outcomes.

Beyond his expertise of specialty care, Dr. Rich was recently appointed to the Advisory Council for the Healthiest Cities and Counties Challenge by the American Public Health Association. In this capacity, he will evaluate plans to create health communities that are submitted by small to moderate size cities and counties. The initiative is designed to improve the lives of the populace through enhanced access to care, better food sources, and community re-engineering. Through site evaluations, Dr. Rich will assess the performance measures, protocols, infrastructure, and effectiveness of the plans.

In addition to Dr. Rich's commitment to improve health care access and quality, he would fill a void in the panel's medical representation since there are no surgeons on this important Commission. Dr. Rich's clinical experience as a cardiothoracic surgeon with board certification in both general surgery and cardiothoracic surgery, combined with his comprehensive understanding of the health care system, makes him an ideal candidate.

Thank you for considering the STS nomination of Dr. Rich for appointment to MedPAC. Should you have any further questions, please contact Courtney Yohe, Director of STS Government Relations at 202-787-1222 or by e-mail cyohe@sts.org.

Sincerely,



Joseph E. Bavaria, MD
President