



The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

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July 22, 2015

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 Physician-Focused Payment Model Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC).

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 has devoted his career to transforming the health care system by promoting policies that support efficient and quality care delivery. He has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to health care quality improvement through service on the Board of Directors for the National Quality Forum (NQF), by fostering value-based payment initiatives as Director of the Center for Medicare Management (CMM), and by leading a regional quality initiative in cardiac surgery at his clinical practice in Virginia.

His significant clinical, policy, and federal agency experience will be helpful to PTAC, especially as it ushers in the new era of Medicare physician payment. He actively supported the creation of Alternative Payment Models (APMs) prior to the passage earlier this year of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act. In fact, when Dr. Rich was asked to testify before Congress during a 2013 hearing on Medicare payment reform, he encouraged Congressional support of a transition to APMs as quickly as possible. More recently, in April of 2014, he worked with the Brookings Institution as a member of the Technical Expert Panel on Alternative Payment Models for Specialty Care to advise the CMS Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation.

Dr. Rich has been recognized as a leader in both quality improvement and health care economics.

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After completing his medical and surgical training at Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School and Stanford University Hospital, Dr. Rich practiced at Sentara in Virginia. Using his health care expertise and evidence-based approach to improving care delivery, he founded the Virginia Cardiac Surgery Quality Initiative (VCSQI), a voluntary regional collaborative comprising 12 cardiac surgical practices in 18 hospitals. As Chair of the VCSQI he was heavily involved in payment reform in the public and private sectors. He authored a CMS demonstration project that involved global pricing, pay for performance and shared savings for Medicare Beneficiaries as well as developed the Quality Physician Payment Program with WellPoint Anthem. The pay for performance program in Virginia subsequently expanded nationally.

Through his work with VCSQI, Dr. Rich proved that an interdisciplinary, team-based approach with provider-aligned incentives promotes the highest quality patient care and is the most effective way to reduce costs and enhance patient outcomes.

As CMM Director, he oversaw the regulation and payment of Medicare fee-for-service providers. In addition, he worked on the principles of value based purchasing and shared savings that identify ways of improving the quality and efficiency of health care delivery. During his tenure, he strengthened the FDA/CMS parallel review process for introducing medical devices in a more efficient way. Prior to his departure, he completed the CMS Roadmap for Implementing Value Based Purchasing in the Traditional Medicare Fee-for-Service Program, and much of this work was echoed in Title III of the Affordable Care Act.

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 and subsequently served on its Board of Directors. During his tenure, Dr. Rich highlighted that quality and cost containment will lead to enhanced value in the healthcare system, and testified before Congress on four occasions to encourage reforms that increase efficiency through aligned provider incentives.

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 (FDA), and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). This effort broke new ground in health policy launching the groundbreaking STS/ACC Registry™ for transcatheter valve therapy devices. It also established a precedent for team-based cardiac care – something he believes will be the “gold standard” for APMs in the future.

In addition to Dr. Rich's commitment to improve health care access and quality, his unique perspective as a surgeon would add to the panel's broad medical representation as Congress intended in the authorizing legislation. Since cardiovascular disease is one of the largest cost centers in Medicare and is the leading cause of death in the United States with a mortality rate of over 375,000 Americans each year,¹ successfully implementing meaningful payment reform in this area is critical to a post-SGR reality. Dr. Rich's clinical knowledge as a cardiothoracic

¹ Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics – At-a-Glance. (2015, January 1). Retrieved July 1, 2015, from http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/ahamah-public/@wcm/@sop/@smd/documents/downloadable/ucm_470704.pdf

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surgeon with board certification in both general surgery and cardiothoracic surgery, combined with a comprehensive understanding of our changing health care system, makes him an ideal candidate.

Thank you for considering the STS nomination of Dr. Rich for appointment to PTAC. 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark S. Allen".

Mark S. Allen, MD
President