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The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is pleased to present this issue of *STS Advocacy Monthly*, an e-newsletter with the latest and most important legislative and regulatory news relevant to cardiothoracic surgery. If you have comments or suggestions, please e-mail advocacy@sts.org.

STS Advocates Block Proposal on Global Surgical Reporting

In a prime example of how grassroots advocacy can have a substantial impact on policy, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently released a final rule that eliminated an [onerous proposal on data collection](#) for global surgical services. As Society President Joseph E. Bavaria, MD explained in [a letter to STS members](#), contributions to STS-PAC and meetings with representatives in Congress were crucial to this victory. STS and other organizations worked diligently to not only preserve the global system, but also to limit the administrative burden that would have come with the previously proposed data collection mandate.

Cuts to Lung Cancer Screening Reimbursement Finalized

Although the newly released 2017 [Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System Final Rule](#) includes a 1% increase for reimbursement on shared decision-making sessions with lung cancer patients, it also includes a significant cut (42%) to lung cancer screening reimbursement. STS vigorously fought this cut via in-person meetings with congressional staff and [Society](#) and [coalition](#) letters to CMS. The Society, along with a coalition of patient and provider organizations, will continue to fight this decision and explain how it may harm vulnerable patient populations.

STS Comments on Use of Real-World Evidence for Medical Devices

The Society [submitted comments](#) on recent Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidance about how real-world evidence, such as clinical registry data, may be used to inform the agency's decisions regarding medical device approval and monitoring. In the letter, STS applauded the FDA's efforts to implement policies that would improve patient access to effective medical devices and help track the safety of those devices as they are utilized.

STS Joins Letters on Pediatric Subspecialty Program, Quality Measures, Tobacco Regulation

The Society recently signed multiorganizational letters that:

- Supported inclusion of the [Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program](#) in the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act (H.R. 2646). The program may help address the current shortage of pediatric subspecialists by providing a financial incentive for providers to choose careers in pediatric mental health and other pediatric subspecialties.
- Expressed concern over CMS's efforts to modify certain [registry-derived quality measures](#) that the agency deemed duplicative or otherwise extraneous. These efforts are inconsistent with congressional intent to give Qualified Clinical Data Registries, such as the STS National Database, substantial flexibility and autonomy in developing quality measures.
- Urged the [House and Senate Appropriations Committees](#), [Congressional leadership](#), and President Obama to reject riders in appropriations bills that would exempt certain tobacco products, such as e-cigarettes and flavored cigars, from FDA oversight and cut the budget of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office on Smoking and Health by 50%.

Key Contact Connect

Refer-a-Friend Challenge

STS Key Contacts are both the face and the backbone of the Society's advocacy efforts. As evidenced by the global surgical reporting decision above, it's incredibly important for STS members to engage in the process. If you have colleagues who have not yet participated in STS advocacy, [encourage them to learn more](#). E-mail Madeleine Stirling at mstirling@sts.org with the names of any interested peers; those who successfully refer a colleague to the program will receive a special award during the Key Contacts session at the [STS 53rd Annual Meeting](#) on Monday, January 23, 2017.