

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

# STS Advocacy Monthly

October 2017

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](mailto:advocacy@sts.org).

## **STS Outlines Concerns with Global Codes Survey**

The Society signed a coalition letter regarding a [draft survey on global surgical services](#) developed by the RAND Corporation for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). The survey is intended to assess the accuracy of how these global codes are valued, as required by the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act. The coalition stressed that, in its current form, the survey will not result in the collection of usable data and urged RAND to make significant revisions. STS previously provided similar feedback to RAND.

## **The Society Signs Letters on Tobacco Control**

STS joined two letters from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids to the [House and Senate Appropriations Committee leadership](#) and the [Congressional leadership at large](#). Both letters ask Congress to reject language in the proposed 2018 budget that would weaken the Food and Drug Administration's authority to oversee certain tobacco products, such as e-cigarettes and flavored cigars that appeal to kids and teenagers, as well as reject a proposed \$50 million cut to the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health.

## **OIG Recommends Collecting Unique Device Identifiers**

The Department of Health & Human Services Office of Inspector General (OIG) recently released a [report showing that CMS spent \\$1.5 billion over 10 years](#) on Medicare services related to the replacement of seven recalled cardiac devices. OIG emphasized that CMS could better identify and track these health care costs by collecting unique device identifier codes in claims forms. STS, along with many other stakeholders across the health care system, has advocated for the collection of device identifiers in claims forms, and OIG's recommendation is an important step forward.

## **Key Contact Connect**

### **Participate in Virtual Advocacy Day**

The Society's next Legislative Fly-In will take place on November 1-2 in Washington, DC, with 23 STS members planning to attend. If you can't make the in-person event, but still would like to participate in advocating for the specialty, check out the [STS Virtual Advocacy Day](#) web page. You can learn about the issues via online webinars and contact your members of Congress via phone calls, letters, Facebook, or Twitter. Don't miss this opportunity to make a difference.

## **Spotlight on a Key Contact: Andrea J. Carpenter, MD, PhD**

Earlier this month, Andrea J. Carpenter, MD, PhD, Professor and Program Director of the Thoracic Surgery Residency Program at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, met with the District Director for her Congressman, Rep. Will Hurd (R-TX). She described her experience:

"[The director] was very attentive to our conversation, and I felt the time was well spent. ... We spent much of our time discussing surgical workforce issues, and I gave him data as well as a copy of the paper about the shortfall of CT surgeons in particular. I explained the pipeline to 'create' a doctor and the need to fund and support residency slots. He was aware of the new med schools that have opened in Texas, but did not know before our meeting that new med school grads did not go with more residency positions for their postgraduate training. Nor did he understand that one can't really practice medicine or surgery immediately after med school. We

also discussed health care access and the need for coverage for all. I was able to give him some data about the volume of unfunded care here in San Antonio (I know these guys love data). He seemed very engaged in our conversation. We talked for more than an hour and he took copious notes, as well as accepted the manuscript and data I gave him. Of course, he promised to write it up for the Congressman.”

If you'd like to meet with your member of Congress in your district, please contact Madeleine Stirling, STS Government Relations Coordinator, at [mstirling@sts.org](mailto:mstirling@sts.org).