



Pennsylvania Surgical News

News & Updates for the Keystone and Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapters
American College of Surgeons

June 2020

We are slowly seeing some light at the end of the tunnel with respect to restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of the Commonwealth has now been upgraded to “Yellow” status with some counties moving into the “Green” phase over the next few weeks. As your surgical practice or hospital facility begins to resume surgical procedures, keep in mind the American College of Surgeons has a great resource bank of guidance documents and other resources to maintain and protect the safety and health of you, your surgical team members and your patients. View the ACS COVID-19 [Clinical Guidance library](#).

Although physical distancing has caused postponement or cancellation of events and moving forward we will need to implement additional safety measures in order to gather, both Chapters continue to look for additional ways to stay connected to our members and provide beneficial services to you.

We encourage members to contribute interesting articles or items to be included in future issues of the newsletter. Contact our Executive Director, Robbi Cook at rcook@rmcmanagementsolutions.com for additional information.

Membership Dues Update

Has your membership lapsed? Now is the time to re-active your membership and continue to be an active supporter of the premier surgical society that advocates on your behalf not only in Pennsylvania but at the Federal level.

The Keystone and Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapters are continuing to work hard to provide the services that mean the most to you today and in the future. We understand you may have been financially impacted, or your institution has cut funding for association memberships, travel, and educational programs due to the COVID crisis.

If you have not renewed, and are able, please submit your dues. If you cannot, we will wait and will work with you. But please contact us to talk about how we can better serve your needs and make it easier for you to continue your support of your local ACS Chapter.

If you require a renewal invoice, please contact the Chapter office at 717-220-5255 or email [Keystone](#) or [Metro Philly](#).

We look forward to continuing to serve as your surgical society.



Amit R. Joshi, MD, FACS
President, MPACS

Changing of the Guard

Another academic year is drawing to a close. It is a bittersweet chapter of every year that is familiar and predictable. Graduating trainees are wrapping up their clinical and administrative responsibilities and preparing for the next chapters in their professional lives. Freshly minted interns are nervously yet excitedly awaiting the start of their clinical duties. Attending surgeons prepare to pivot from working with seasoned end-of-year trainees to freshly promoted ones. And yet, this year is unlike many in the last few decades. The COVID-19 pandemic has utterly disrupted surgical care, graduate medical education, and our day-to-day lives in hospitals and offices.

The effects of social distancing, disruptions in elective surgery, and widespread illness in the community have been inconsistent and capricious. Some have seen their practices completely upended while others have been able to maintain some normalcy. In other cases, surgeons have been redeployed to unfamiliar roles in medicine, sometimes at considerable risk to themselves and their families. As a community of surgeons, we have ample reason to be proud of the efforts put forth by so many of our colleagues to care for some of the sickest patients in the region.

Meanwhile, your representatives in the Philadelphia ACS Chapter have worked diligently through the year to strengthen it. We have placed the chapter on firmer financial footing through a management change. We have overhauled our bylaws and committee structure to encourage more participation in the organization and to allow for nimbler and future-oriented initiatives. It has been an honor to serve as your President this year. I thank my co-councilors, and particularly the

Executive Committee, in whose capable hands the chapter will continue to flourish.

Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapter Annual Business Meeting Update

With restrictions in place that prevented an in-person annual joint meeting in May for Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapter members, the Council quickly made the decision to hold its Annual Business Meeting virtually providing members the ability to vote electronically on issues affecting the Chapter.

Two key issues were presented to the general membership for review, discussion, and voting:

- 1) Proposed Amendments to the Chapter Bylaws that would realign the Chapter Council to provide additional leadership opportunities and reduce time commitments. The amendments also realigned the Bylaws to be consistent with ACS and other affiliated chapters.
- 2) 2020-2021 Slate of Officers & Directors to install the new Council Officers and Directors.

Voting members were provided 45 days to review, ask questions and vote on the issues. Both issues were approved by the general voting membership. The newly revised Bylaws will be available on the MPACS website shortly, and we are pleased to introduce you to your 2020-2021 Officers who will assume their positions on July 1, 2020.

President: Jeffrey Farma, MD, FACS
President-Elect: Niels Martin, MD, FACS
Secretary/Treasurer: Matthew Philp, MD, FACS
Immediate Past President: Amit Joshi, MD, FACS
Member-at-Large: Robert Josloff, MD, FACS
Member-at-Large: Francesco Palazzo, MD, FACS

Officers will serve a one-year term and Members-at-Large will serve a three-year term.

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS NEWS & UPDATES

ACS LEGISLATIVE/REGULATORY UPDATES

Economic Survival Strategies in the COVID World: A Guide from the ACS Practice Protection Committee

As part of the ACS' ongoing efforts to assist surgeons managing the intense financial burden placed upon them by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the ACS Practice Protection Committee has built upon the Practical Suggestions and Options to Consider section of its resource document to provide a guide to economic survival strategies.

The document can be found [here](#) and includes a set of key principles and a suggested process for Fellows to undertake based on an Excel spreadsheet exercise of personal and business finances. In addition, the Committee has provided suggestions to consider based on which of three specific scenarios you believe most accurately describes your financial situation.

ACS Provides Testimony on Trauma, Cancer, and Patient Identification Appropriations to Senate Subcommittee

ACS recently provided written testimony to the US Senate Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies as the subcommittee plans for fiscal year 2021 appropriations. The ACS' testimony outlined several appropriation-related priorities, including complete funding of \$11.5 million for the MISSION ZERO program, increased funding for cancer prevention and research, funding specifically for public health research into firearm morbidity and mortality, and removal of a ban that prevents the Department of Health and Human Services from evaluating a range of patient identification solutions.

Read the full written testimony [here](#).

ACS ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF SURGICAL CARE COALITION

On June 18, 2020, the ACS announced the launch of the [Surgical Care Coalition](#), a collaborative effort between the ACS and 11 other surgical associations.

Our health care system is under extraordinary pressure. The COVID-19 pandemic has created an uncertain financial future for surgeons—and this is before we factor in the Medicare payments cuts, planned before the pandemic, take effect in six months.

The Surgical Care Coalition message is simple: **Now is not the time for payment cuts to any health care providers.**

While the ACS has worked in concert with these other surgical groups in the past, the Coalition is now coming together as a unified force to address the pending CMS payment cuts. As a coalition, we are focused on getting Congress and the Administration to understand how these payment cuts will hurt patients and their care teams. These cuts threaten patients' access to timely surgical care and will impact the quality of life for the people we care for every day.

Delayed surgeries have negatively impacted hospital finances and surgeons' private practices—an important small business in many communities. **ACS learned from you and more than 5,000 other surgeons that the pandemic and planned cuts could have serious consequences on your practices.** Among the findings:

- 1 in 3 private practice surgeons are concerned they will have to shut down.
- 45% of surgeons have made a financial sacrifice by cutting their own pay or by paying employees despite falling revenues.

- 35% of surgeons suffered negative financial consequences due to COVID-19 such as taking on debt and laying off or furloughing employees.

Right now, we are focused on putting these issues on the nation's agenda and stopping the payment cuts to surgeons. We are asking Congress to step in and ensure Medicare patients continue to have the best access—to the best care—when they need it and where they need it.

ACS will share more information about its efforts to advocate for you on the Hill as part of their newly-launched digital newsletter, *Bulletin: Advocacy Brief*.

Follow the Coalition on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#), and use your voice to oppose the Medicare payment cuts to protect your patients!

WONDERING WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATURE?

The Pennsylvania legislature has focused much of their efforts on COVID-19 issues, but there have still been some significant bills introduced relating to healthcare. There are only a few days left before both the House and Senate recess for the summer and return in the fall for the final few weeks of the 2019-2020 legislative session.

Keystone and Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapters continue to monitor legislation and communicate with the ACS Government Relations team to determine if bills require action from the membership.

An overview of current bills being monitored will be emailed shortly to all members. A brief synopsis and a link to the Bill will be included.

We will continue to keep you apprised of changes with the current bills being discussed and when new legislation has been introduced that would affect your ability to practice and serve your patients.

USE ACS RESOURCES TO WEATHER NEGATIVE SYMPTOMS CAUSED BY COVID-19

Long work hours. Physical exhaustion. Anxiety. Emotional withdrawal. Poor sleep. Attrition. Depression. Suicidal ideation. Violence. Intimate partner violence. Decreased or lost employment. Worries about the health and safety of family and friends. Loneliness. [All are symptoms of decreased well-being.](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic created the perfect storm of negative symptoms coupled with revealing [health, economic, social, and diversity disparities](#) and the [loss of best practices and procedures](#) as health care professionals and hospitals systems navigated the stress placed on systems of care.

Everyday health care professionals manage an onslaught of burnout symptoms with little time for rest and recovery. The American College of Surgeons (ACS) remains committed to your well-being and providing resources and tools to support you as you continue to adjust to life during the pandemic.

One step you can take today is using the [ACS Surgeon Well-Being Index](#). This [video guide](#) is a useful resource on how to use the Physician Well-Being Index, and more information is available in the [user guide](#).

To start using the tool, Associate Fellows and Fellows can use the code **fellow20** and Resident Members can use the code **resident20**. As always, the Well-Being Index is 100 percent anonymous. [Your information and score are private](#), and your individual score will not be shared with anyone, including the ACS.

Access for International members is not currently available.

Click [here](#) for additional ACS Resources.



Benefits of Joining Your Local ACS Chapter

Why belong to your local ACS Chapter?

Local Chapters offer

- opportunities to network with your colleagues in your backyard
- attend seminars and other educational events close to home
- monitor legislative and regulatory issues affecting Pennsylvania physicians
- looking for guidance or assistance with an issue, you can reach out to another member, close to home, that could be dealing with the same state-related issue

Healthcare associations, like Keystone and Metropolitan Philadelphia, represent the interests of physicians and the healthcare team. Focusing on the use of collective surgical knowledge the Chapters work in collaboration with the ACS to define standards and policy, provide educational opportunities and be a trusted voice in the surgical community.

Not a member? Join today at [KCACS](#) or [MPACS](#).

STAY UP TO DATE WITH ACS INFORMATION, GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS & MORE



The Keystone & Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapters are pleased to welcome the following new members who have joined since May 1, 2020:

Thomas Butler, MD (Associate Fellow)
Aaron Ilano, MD (Associate Fellow)



The ACS Clinical Congress 2020 is scheduled to take place at McCormick Place in Chicago, IL from October 4 through 8.

The COVID-19 landscape continues to rapidly change. As of now, Clinical Congress is scheduled for October in Chicago, IL. The well-being of attendees, exhibitors, and staff is our highest priority, and we are committed to providing a safe experience for all who attend the meeting. ACS leadership meets regularly to assess all our events, and we will share additional information if there are any changes to Clinical Congress plans in the future.

For a complete list of events, registration and hotel information, click [here](#).



MPACS COVID-19 TASK FORCE UPDATE

Aley M. Tohamy, MD, FACS
Task Force Chair

When the COVID-19 Pandemic hit the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and it affected the healthcare system in the Philadelphia region, surgeons felt the impact of this virus on their daily practice and life. As the local Philadelphia-based Chapter of the American College of Surgeons, MPACS formed an Ad-Hoc Task Force to reach out to our member surgeons and residents to address their professional concerns and questions.

The mission of the MPACS COVID-19 Task Force is to educate its members about the Pandemic, reiterate the American College of Surgeons guidelines and recommendations regarding safe practice and resuming surgeries, and to integrate these guidelines with local and state government recommendations.

The Task Force, comprised of members from a variety of local academic and community institutions, have met virtually over the past few weeks to shared different opinions and concerns and to bring relevant discussions to the table. In such a fluid changing environment, it is important to address professional, safety, and clinical concerns of our members and provide resources to help them navigate the uncharted waters we face.

The Task Force compiled a series of questions and sent a survey to our attending members to answer some of those concerns and to prioritize their most crucial concerns. A separate survey was sent specifically to our resident members to gain valuable insight into how this Pandemic has affected them and their educational concerns.

In the near future, a forum will be hosted by the Task Force featuring expert key opinion leaders in the

field of medicine and surgery to address these critical concerns.

Your engagement with MPACS is important to highlight concerns in this evolving pandemic. Responses will help guide the Society to implement programs to serve you best.

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

~ Albert Einstein

RASACS

RESIDENT AND ASSOCIATE SOCIETY



Cassie Sonntag, MD, a Resident at Penn State Hershey, is Chair of the RAS-ACS Education Committee. Cassie sits on the Keystone Council as a Resident Representative

The RAS-ACS group continues to host weekly “Take A Breath and Decompress” virtual hangouts to talk about current events, concerns, or most importantly, to just hang out.

Hangouts are open to all ACS RAS members and are geared to help fill the gap of cancelled didactic and operative education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Follow the group on Twitter at [@RASACS](#) for updates on topics. Due to issues with Zoom hackers, registration for the weekly sessions is required.

Contact me (csonntag@pennstatehealth.psu.edu) if you are a surgeon teaching medical students and residents and would like to share your video lecture (30-60 minutes of up-to-date material aimed at learners).

Learn more about [RAS-ACS](#).



CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION (CME) REMINDER FOR PENNSYLVANIA PHYSICIANS

Just a reminder – 2020 is a licensure renewal year and the clock is ticking.

The Pennsylvania Board of Medicine (**PBM**) and the Pennsylvania Board of Osteopathic Medicine (**PBOM**) require all licensees to earn 100 CME Credits every two-year renewal cycle. A minimum of 20 of the 100 CME must be Category 1 Credits, and both licensing boards require content-specific CME be included in this total.

PBOM licensees must renew by October 31, 2020 and PBM licensees must renew by December 31, 2020. The requirements are detailed below:

- **100 Credit hours every two-years:** A minimum of 20 hours must be *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ (PBM)* or *AOA Category 1-A Credits (PBOM)*.
- **2 Credit hours addressing Pain Management/Addiction/Prescribing:** All prescribers or dispensers must complete at least two hours of continuing education in pain management, the identification of addiction or in the practices of prescribing or dispensing of opioids. This continuing education must be in *AMA Category 1 or 2 approved activities for the PBM* and may be in either *AOA Category 1 or 2 approved activities or AMA Category 1 or 2 approved activities* to meet the **PBOM** requirement.
- **2 Board-approved credit hours addressing Child Abuse Recognition/Reporting:** Two hours of Board-approved continuing education in child abuse recognition and reporting requirements must be completed for renewal or reactivation of a license.

- **12 Credit hours addressing Patient Safety/Risk Management:** At least 12 of the 100 hours must be completed in activities related to patient safety or risk management and may be completed in either *AMA Category 1 or 2 activities*. **This requirement is exclusive to the Pennsylvania Board of Medicine.**

The American College of Surgeons has compiled and posted summaries of these [State CME Requirements](#) for your convenience. The Keystone and Metropolitan Philadelphia Chapters and the American College of Surgeons (ACS) are committed to providing members with the highest quality educational resources and support to meet Continuing Medical Education (CME) requirements, for example:

- Monthly online *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* and Self-Assessment Credit through your member subscription to the [Journal of the American College of Surgeons](#)
- Three free online [Safe Pain Control courses](#) totaling 4 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*.
- Coming soon! A new online 8-module course, *Optimizing Perioperative Pain Management: An Evidence-Based Approach*, will offer 8 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*
- [Clinical Congress 2019 Webcast packages](#) offer up to 175 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* and 175 Self-Assessment Credits which can be tailored to a physician's interests or requirements, including Credit to Address Opioid/Pain Management and Patient Safety.
- Chapter Educational Conferences provide additional resources and offer up to 7.5 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*.

State requirements are subject to change. Please contact mycme@facs.org or your [state medical board](#) if you have any questions or concerns. Individuals must check with their state to verify that course content meets specific CME requirements.