

Chester County Medical Society

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Legislative Roundtable



Over two dozen local physicians met last week with four legislators in a “legislative roundtable” session at the Chester County Hospital in West Chester. The program was coordinated by Mian A. Jan, MD President of the Chester County Medical and Chief of Medicine at Chester County Hospital and included Congressman Ryan Costello, Senator Andy Dinniman and State Representatives John Lawrence and Carolyn Comitta. The discussions included a focus on several important topics facing medicine and healthcare and were conducted in positive and respectful comments by each of the elected officials and physicians.

On the subject of health care reform, it was agreed that the health care system needs to work for all, including patients; physicians and other providers; hospitals and health systems and the payers. The group discussed in some detail the need to establish limits on awards for non-economic damages in cases of professional liability. It was noted that HB 1215 has passed in

the US House of Representatives and is currently in the US Senate. HB 1215 includes a \$250,000 limit (cap) on awards for pain and suffering. The bill has already passed the US House of Representatives and is in a Senate committee.

Congressman Ryan Costello commented saying, "Hearing the concerns of medical professionals in my district is invaluable to enacting practical policy and effectively representing doctors and patients in my community. It is clear that Chester County doctors want to spend more time helping their patients instead of navigating a burdensome bureaucracy. I will continue working with my colleagues in Congress on bipartisan solutions that will improve our healthcare system through innovation and reforms that truly put patients and doctors first."

The group also addressed several "scope of practice" issues in which other health care providers such as nurses and physician assistants seek to expand their practices and eliminate much of the existing supervisory and collaborative agreements. In the ensuing discussion it was noted that the elected officials depend on input from their constituents regarding these important topics and that they hope to hear from more physicians and other health care professionals.

Several "practice management" and "quality of care" issues were also discussed including, but not limited to: the significant payment disparities between independent practicing physicians and hospital/health system owned practices; the enormous challenges facing physicians and their patients with insurance company required pre-authorizations and difficulties in the credentialing of physicians with payers.

Also discussed was a new policy adopted by one Southeastern Pennsylvania market dominant health insurer which will deny payments to physicians for many services provided to patients on the same day as other services have been provided. It was noted that this new policy is a contractual issue between the health insurance company and physicians in their network and not a legislative matter, but that it has been imposed on participating providers who have no appeals process.

State Senator Andy Dinniman also commented on the positive discussions saying "Chester County is home to a medical community of energetic, highly skilled, and innovative physicians who are a tremendous asset to our region. We must continue to work together to ensure that legislation is not passed that hinders or deters our outstanding medical community," He added, "In addition, doctors – not insurance companies – need to be the ones practicing medicine and making treatment decisions for their patients."

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