

AMP Economic Affairs Committee (EAC)

The committee currently includes 12 members (see AMP web site). EAC provides a representative from AMP to the Pathology Coding Caucus (Aaron Bossler MD PhD). The Chair of the Professional Relations Committee (Elaine Lyon PhD in 2011, Roger Klein MD in 2012) sits on EAC *ex officio*.

The Economic Affairs Committee has been productively engaged since the last AMP Annual Meeting in several areas. The ongoing development of a new system of molecular CPT codes has involved members of EAC both on the AMA Molecular CPT Workgroup as well as behind the scenes in discussions within EAC. I don't know if members realize, but the new system adopted by the AMA CPT Editorial Panel is pretty much entirely the one developed independently by AMP EAC in 2009 as a potential 'solution' to the (lack of) transparency associated with current molecular coding using the 'stacking codes.' In a stroke of serendipity, the Editorial Panel decided a fix was essential just as the AMP work product was being completed, and the rest, as they say, is history. An update and historical reprise of this process will be sponsored by EAC Friday morning, November 18 at this year's Annual Meeting. While the new CPT codes will be published in the 2012 CPT book, they will not be adopted by CMS (and probably other payers, although we're not sure) until 2013. The placement of codes on the Clinical Laboratory or Physician Fee Schedule will also be determined in 2013. At a special meeting to discuss the new codes last July at CMS, AMP and a number of other professional societies argued for placement of most or all of these codes on the Physician Fee Schedule because the data from the large majority of such assays requires professional interpretation to be useful to a clinician.

A subgroup of EAC has led a multi-stakeholder effort involving six professional societies to get agreement on principles to support professional component reimbursement of such tests by qualified non-physician PhD laboratorians which is currently not authorized. This will require Congressional action, no small feat in the current political climate, but after over a year of hard work, we are coming down the home stretch, finalizing details and looking for members of Congress to sponsor this legislation. Look for us to have you lobby your legislator, probably early in 2012. Passage of a bill prior to a CMS decision on fee schedule placement might facilitate placement on the Physician Fee Schedule, so the large majority of AMP members have a common stake in this legislation.

Working in conjunction with a workgroup from the Clinical Practice Committee, AMP crafted a code change proposal which would lead to new codes for multiplex testing of viruses, a current area that is problematic to code. These codes could appear in the CPT book in 2013.

Having solved the coding problem for molecular, and with an eye now on payment policy for useful molecular pathology assays, EAC has embarked on an ambitious exploratory initiative to identify areas of common interest with groups we have found ourselves opposing regularly on actions in Washington. Following a productive initial session in

late September with a representative of that community, we believe there is potential for significant concerted action and progress.

EAC would again like to acknowledge assistance provided through an unrestricted grant from Abbott Diagnostics which has provided support for Committee activities including attendance at CPT Editorial Panel Meetings and at meetings of the professional coalition seeking to obtain qualified healthcare practitioner status for PhD laboratorians interpreting molecular assays.