

April 2, 2002

To: Illinois Radiological Society members

From: Raymond E. Bertino, MD, President

Re: Activity Update

This update will give you information on the recent activities of the Illinois Radiological Society. I encourage you to check out the IRS website at www.illradsoc.org for additional information.

ACR Chapter Leadership Meeting

Last month, Thomas Anderson, MD and I participated in the ACR Chapter Leaders' Meeting in Washington, DC. The ACR had an excellent program. Topics included a history of ACR's Government Relations and Grassroots Activities, a Medicare Carrier Advisory Committee Update, a Congressional Issues Forum, a Research Update, an Economics Issues Forum, a discussion on Medicare Coverage Determinations for New Technologies and a session on Radiation Accidents and Nuclear Terrorism.

Current Legislative Issues

Extensive discussion was also held on current issues on Capitol Hill affecting radiologists. The three primary issues are summarized below. More detailed information is available on the IRS Website:

- Access to Timely Screening for Mammography:
Due to the increased cost of providing mammography services resulting from increased government regulations and because of a Medicare reimbursement set well below the cost of providing this service, a significant number of facilities have closed. The ACR is supporting an increase in the Medicare payment to provide better patient access to mammography facilities.
- Reduction in Medicare's 2002 Physician Conversion Factor:
The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently announced that Medicare's 2002 Physicians Conversion Factor would be 5.4 percent lower than the 2001 conversion factor. The reduction stems from a flawed formula that penalizes physicians for economic downturns and from CMS data errors. This significant across-the-board cut could exacerbate existing access problems for Medicare beneficiaries, particularly in rural communities. ACR is supporting legislation that would reduce this penalty and create an opportunity for Congress to make systemic changes in the physician update system.
- Stable Funding for the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB):
The NIBIB was recently founded with the support of the ACR and is currently being established. Research supported by the Institute will accelerate the development and transfer to clinical practice of new radiological tools to detect, diagnose and treat disease. Important research initiatives include: Molecular Imaging, Optical Imaging, Minimally Invasive Therapies and Teleradiology and Telemedicine development. The initial \$112 million appropriated for 2002 is a good start, but a substantial increase is need to accomplish the goals Congress and Institute supporters had in mind when establishing the Institute.

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Legislative visits

Following these informational sessions, Doctor Anderson and I had an opportunity to visit with seven members or staff of the Illinois Congressional Delegation to discuss and encourage support for these issues. Offices visited included Senators **Richard Durbin** and **Peter Fitzgerald** and Congressmen **Dennis Hastert**, **Philip Crane**, **Jerry Weller**, **John Shimkus** and **Ray LaHood**. Most of these Illinois representatives had not signed on as co-sponsors of legislation related to our issues.

Doctor Anderson is IRS's representative on the Medicare Carrier Advisory Committee. In that capacity, he regularly deals with issues involving Medicare reimbursement for radiologists. During our meetings with the various congressional offices, he was very effective. With his experience and presence he provided very persuasive arguments in support of IRS concerns and radiology concerns in general.

IRS Annual Meeting

We want to remind and encourage all IRS members in both the Central and Chicago divisions to register for the IRS Annual Meeting, to be held May 18-19, 2002 at the Westin River North Hotel in Chicago. This is the first program of its type sponsored by the IRS and will include educational programming for both diagnostic radiology and radiation oncology, and cover policy issues affecting radiologists in Illinois. You should have received copies of the program/registration brochure in the mail, however, a photocopy of the brochure is enclosed. The brochure and registration forms are also available to download from the IRS website at www.illradsoc.org or you can contact the IRS Headquarters Office at 630-323-5344 or email info@illradsoc.org.

ACR/IRS Dues

We are pleased with the positive response from IRS members to the ACR dues increase and we want to thank you for your continued support for the important ACR and IRS activities. The third and final dues invoice has been issued in March and we encourage those of you who have not paid your dues to do so as soon as possible. The membership committee will be following up with those individuals who have not responded yet to verify addresses and to answer any questions a member may have about ACR and IRS activities. From our discussions with the Illinois Congressional Offices, ACR is well respected as an advocate for radiology related issues and as a source of unbiased information with regard to radiology.

IRS Website

The IRS Website continues to grow. An informational flyer on the website was mailed out last fall and is included again with this update. The IRS Membership Directory is now active and will be continually updated. It is password protected and the generic user name and password is included in the enclosed flyer. Please check out your information and report any corrections to the headquarters office at info@illradsoc.org.

We will soon have an IRS Members Forum up and running. We are looking at several options, including an email exchange program, an on-line bulletin board and a chat room. To date we have about 420 email addresses out of the almost 800 IRS members. Therefore, we encourage those of you who have not supplied your email address to provide it to the IRS headquarters so they can update their records as well as at the ACR. Again, you can email your corrections, or suggestions to the IRS headquarters office at info@illradsoc.org, or call 630-323-5344.