

LEADERSHIP PAGE



The ACC Is Your Advocate



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Each year the American College of Cardiology's (ACC's) Legislative Conference brings together hundreds of cardiovascular professionals from across the United States for 3 days of advocacy training and opportunities to meet with federal lawmakers and their staff about the most pressing issues facing the profession and the patients they serve.

Over the years, ACC members have taken to Capitol Hill to advocate for patient access to imaging services; repeal of the flawed sustainable growth rate formula used to calculate Medicare physician payment; funding for cardiovascular research, graduate medical education, and prevention initiatives; medical liability reform; and balanced health care reforms that meet the now quadruple aim of improved outcomes, better care, lower costs, and clinician well-being.

The Conference has also grown substantially in size and breadth, with more than 400 members spanning the entire cardiovascular care team taking time out of their schedules to come to Washington, DC. From Fellows-in-Training to Cardiovascular Team members, from first-time advocates to seasoned leaders, the conference provides a unique opportunity for the many voices that make up the cardiovascular profession to speak as one.

This year was no different. Participants were able to engage in discussions with ACC member leaders and advocacy staff on the potential effects of the proposed 2019 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, particularly regarding provisions that would streamline evaluation and management documentation. A separate panel of ACC leaders provided a more in-depth look at the broader topic of administrative burden, including prior authorization, and opportunities for both the College and its members to educate

policymakers about the effects on patients and clinicians alike. Breakout sessions focused on advocacy training for first-time attendees, how to win followers and influence people using social media, creative approaches to state advocacy, and tips on relationship-building. "Storytelling"—getting your message across successfully and succinctly—was also an important element of the conference, as was educating attendees about ways to succeed in new advanced payment models.

Participants then took what they learned and applied it in meetings with senators, representatives, and key congressional staff. All told, hundreds of visits were made to House and Senate offices. Along with their own personal experiences in their day-to-day practice lives, attendees shared several key topics with congressional offices, including:

- Thanking members for their votes in favor of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which addressed several top cardiovascular priorities including supervision of cardiac rehabilitation by physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and clinical nurse specialists beginning in 2024; simplification of the Quality Payment Program; additional funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program; authorization of increased funding for the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and elimination of the Independent Payment Advisory Board.
- Requesting continued congressional oversight of issues that adversely affect patient care and contribute to administrative burden, such as prior authorization.
- Urging ongoing support for public health and medical research through robust funding for the

National Institutes of Health, Food and Drug Administration, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and by cosponsoring HR 3592, the South Asian Heart Health Awareness and Research Act, and supporting passage of HR 1222/S 477, the Congenital Heart Futures Reauthorization Act.

New this year was an enhanced focus on the collaborative efforts of the ACC and partner cardiovascular societies. United together, we are stronger. A special cardiovascular society session of society presidents, chief executive officers, and advocacy staff provided a unique chance to not only recognize the myriad challenges facing the profession, but to celebrate the many accomplishments of each specialty and identify opportunities to pursue shared goals in the transformation of patient care. Additionally, presidents and other leaders of the ACC, Heart Rhythm Society, The Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions, Association of Black Cardiologists, Heart Failure Society of America, and several others engaged in several joint meetings on Capitol Hill to drive home the themes of the conference. The adage about “strength in numbers” is as true in cardiology, as it is anywhere else. The ACC’s new vision of “a world where innovation and

knowledge optimize cardiovascular care” cannot be achieved in a vacuum. We need our partners—both in the United States and around the world—for this vision to truly become a reality.

Influencing and changing health policy does not occur in just 3 days—although we often wish it could. For every 3 steps forward, there are often 2 steps back. However, real change has occurred over the years thanks to the groundwork that has been laid and the relationships that have been established as part of the Legislative Conference over the last 25+ years. Our challenge to ACC members is to build on the advocacy efforts of those who were able to attend the Legislative Conference, whether through emails to lawmakers, in-district visits to members of Congress when they are home on break, “Cardiologist for a Day” programs that invite lawmakers to view a practice in action, participation in ACC Chapter or partner society lobby days, and more! The ACC is your home—make your voice heard.

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