

*scope...*

## Ask your legislator to protect IBD treatment options for your patients

*American Gastroenterological Association*


This week, AGA and members of the Step Therapy Coalition were on Capitol Hill and met with over 20 offices to garner support for Restoring the Patient's Voice Act (HR 2077), legislation sponsored by Reps. Brad Wenstrup, R-OH, and Raul Ruiz, D-CA, that would provide patients and providers with an equitable and transparent appeals process when subject to step therapy protocols.

We received positive feedback from our coalition meetings and are hoping it translates into an increase in cosponsorship for the legislation. AGA is concerned that a growing number of patients with inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD) who are often treated with biologics are being subjected to step therapy protocols that can have adverse health effects on patients who fail or do not respond positively to the medication that the insurer is forcing them to try.

The bipartisan legislation would require employer sponsored health plans to do the following:

- Establish a clear and convenient process for physicians to appeal a step therapy protocol for their patient.
- Grant patients exceptions to step therapy under five critical circumstances.
- Expedite care by requiring a timely decision for appeals – three days or 72 hours or within 24 hours if life threatening.

We thank those members who took the time to contact their members of Congress to ask them to cosponsor HR 2077 and if you haven't already, please *call on your legislator to support this legislation*.

AGA is working closely with the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation, Arthritis Foundation, Digestive Diseases National Coalition, National Psoriasis Foundation, American Academy of Dermatology, American College of Rheumatology and other partners in generating support for HR 2077. 



Join us in New Orleans  
for the AGS 2018  
Annual Conference

Feb. 17-18, 2018

Hyatt Centric  
French Quarter  
New Orleans

**The AGS Room Block at the Hyatt Centric is almost full.** Reserve your room today by calling (888) 421-1442 and asking for the Alabama Gastroenterological Society room block or reserve online at [www.tinyurl.com/2018AGSReservations](http://www.tinyurl.com/2018AGSReservations).

See pages 2 and 3 for meeting agenda and registration.

# AGS 2018 Annual Conference

Feb. 17-18, 2018

Hyatt Centric French Quarter  
New Orleans



www.alagastro.org



## AGS Conference Agenda

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.

Breakfast with Exhibitors

8:00 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

J. DeWayne Tooson, MD, AGS President

8:15 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

HCV Transplant Cholestatic Liver Disease

Phillip Henderson, DO, Clinical Instructor of Medicine,  
USA College of Medicine

9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Management of Achalasia

Mouen Khashab, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine  
and Director of Therapeutic Endoscopy, Johns Hopkins  
Hospital, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology

10:15 a.m.

Morning Break with Exhibitors

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Advances in Therapeutic Endoscopy

Mouen Khashab, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine  
and Director of Therapeutic Endoscopy, Johns Hopkins  
Hospital, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Management of Refractory IBD

Steve Hanauer, MD, Professor of Medicine,  
Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Mardi Gras Lunch Party with Exhibitors

2:30 p.m.

Enjoy the rest of your day in the City of New Orleans

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

7:00 a.m. – 7:30 a.m.

Breakfast with Exhibitors

7:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.

Business Session, Installation of 2018-2020 Officers

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Coding Pitfalls in Ambulatory Surgery Centers

Kristin Vaughn, CPC, Ask Mueller Consulting, LLC

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

GI Practice Management, Ancillary Opportunities in GI  
Reed Hogan, MD, GI Associates and Endoscopy Center

10:00 a.m.

Morning Break with Exhibitors

10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Advances in Pancreatic and Biliary Endoscopy

Kenneth Sigman, MD, Birmingham Gastroenterology  
Associates

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Management of Liver Tumors

David Fettig, MD, Birmingham Gastroenterology  
Associates

12:15 p.m.

Evaluation and Adjourn

#### *The accreditation statement:*

This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama through the joint providership of the Medical Foundation of Alabama and the Alabama Gastroenterological Society. The Medical Foundation of Alabama is accredited by the Medical Association of the State of Alabama to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

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## 2018 ANNUAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_  MD  DO  CRNP  PA  PharmD  Medical Science Liaison\*

Practice Name \_\_\_\_\_  Resident/Fellow  Student  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Office Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Office Manager's E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Dietary Needs \_\_\_\_\_  First time attendee? (check if yes)

### FEES (After Feb. 9 add \$100)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AGS Physician Member or Out of State Physician \$375               | <input type="checkbox"/> Physician Nonmember \$475 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AGS Associate Member or Out of State Non Physician Clinician \$275 | <input type="checkbox"/> Associate Nonmember \$375 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retiree - \$150  | <input type="checkbox"/> Resident - Free           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Science Liaison* \$475                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Student - Free            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice Manager \$150   |  |

\*The medical science liaison's company must be a registered vendor at the conference. Contact Jennifer Hayes for details.

\_\_\_\_\_ Total number of adults attending reception

Guest Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### ONLINE REGISTRATION

Go to [www.tinyurl.com/AGS2018](http://www.tinyurl.com/AGS2018) to register online.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Reserve a room at the Hyatt Centric French Quarter online at [www.tinyurl.com/2018AGSReservations](http://www.tinyurl.com/2018AGSReservations) or call 888-421-1442 and ask for the Alabama Gastroenterological Society room block. Rates begin at \$229 per night and are valid for three days before and three days after the conference based on availability. **The room block expires Jan. 24, 2018, but will likely sell out before that date.**

If you have special needs or need assistance, please contact Jennifer Hayes, at (334) 954-2500 or [JHayes@alamedical.org](mailto:JHayes@alamedical.org).

### PAYMENT

Credit Card:  VISA  MasterCard  American Express  Check made payable to AGS

Cardholder Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address for receipt \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### MAIL REGISTRATION FORM AND PAYMENT TO

AGS Annual Conference | Attn. Jennifer Hayes | PO Box 1900 | Montgomery, AL 36102-1900 | Fax (334) 269-5200

# CMS releases 2018 Medicare payment rules

*American Gastroenterological Association*

CMS has released two calendar year (CY) 2018 rules that finalize policy and payment changes for the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) and the Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS) and Ambulatory Surgical Centers (ASC) Payment System.

The PFS final rule appeared in the Nov. 15 *Federal Register*, and OPPS and ASC final rule was published in the Nov. 13 issue.

## 2018 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Final Rule

**2018 Proposed Conversion Factor: The 2018 PFS conversion factor is \$35.99**, an increase of +0.41 percent from the 2017 PFS conversion factor of \$35.89. This update reflects the +0.50 percent update established under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA), reduced by 0.09 percent, due to the misvalued code target recapture amount, required under the Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014.

**Payment Changes for Anesthesia for GI Procedures:** For CY 2018, the AMA CPT Editorial Panel is deleting CPT codes 00740 (Anesthesia for upper GI procedures) and 00810 (Anesthesia for lower GI procedures) and replacing them with the following five new codes. The current CY 2017 base unit for upper and lower GI is 5 base units.

### CMS finalized the following values for CY 2018:

- 00731 (Anesthesia for upper GI, not otherwise specified) = 5 base units.
- 00732 (Anesthesia for upper GI, ERCP) = 6 base units
- 00811 (Anesthesia for lower GI, not otherwise specified) = 4 base units
- 00812 (Anesthesia for screening colonoscopy) = 3 base units
- 00813 (Anesthesia for upper and lower GI during the same session) = 5 base units

Each base unit is approximately \$22.

Read the full Tri-Society regulatory summary of the final rule at [www.gastro.org](http://www.gastro.org).

## PDMP software change nears

The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) promotes public health and welfare by detecting diversion, abuse, and misuse of prescription medications classified as controlled substances under the Alabama Uniform Controlled Substances Act. On Dec. 12, 2017, the Alabama PDMP is scheduled to change its database software system to the Appriss PMP AWAARxE system.

In PMP AWAARxE, the username will be an email address and **each user must have a unique user name** (email address). Any accounts that share the same email address will **not** be transferred to the new system. If your account is not transferred, you will have to submit a new registration application and wait for your account to be approved by the state administrator.

For assistance, please contact technical support directly at (855) 925-4767 option 1.

For policy questions, you may contact the Alabama Prescription Drug Monitoring Program at (877) 703-9869 or by email at [pdmp@adph.state.al.us](mailto:pdmp@adph.state.al.us).

## Dec. 1-7 is Crohn's & Colitis Awareness Week

Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week is observed each year from Dec. 1 through Dec. 7 to shed light on the challenges faced by people who suffer from these illnesses.



According to the latest figures, IBD affects an estimated 1.6 million Americans. In fact, there are more than 70,000 new cases of IBD in the United States each year.

**Tips for Managing IBD.**

## New Medicare cards coming in April

CMS has redesigned its Medicare card to remove Social Security numbers and use a randomly-assigned number to better protect users from identity theft and fraud.

CMS will begin mailing the *new cards* in April 2018 to meet the April 2019 deadline to replace all existing Medicare cards.

### How to get ready for the change

- Ask your billing and office staff if your system can accept the 11-digit alphanumeric Medicare Beneficiary Identifier.
- If your system cannot accept the new number, system changes should be made by April 2018.
- If providers use vendors to bill Medicare, ask them if they are ready for the change.
- Verify your patients' addresses: If the



address you have on file is different than the address you get in electronic eligibility transaction responses, ask your patients to contact Social Security and update their Medicare records. This may require coordination between your billing and office staff.

For more information go to <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/New-Medicare-Card/Providers/Providers.html>.

## ASGE launches GI Operations Benchmarking Platform

The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) has launched a new and improved interactive tool to assist its members in measuring the financial and operational performance of their GI practice.

Powered by the ASGE Beyond our Walls Campaign, the ASGE GI Operations Benchmarking Platform supports healthcare teams in enhancing practice efficiencies and profitability through data-driven decision-making.

A free member benefit, ASGE's GI Operations Benchmarking Platform enables GI units from all settings to benchmark their unit(s) against more than 100 metrics.

More information can be found at <http://www.asge.org/benchmarking>.

## Government Affairs Conference set for January

Make plans to join your colleagues at the Medical Association of the State of Alabama's Governmental Affairs Conference in Washington, D.C., Jan. 29-31, 2018. Protecting and promoting medicine's interests on Capitol Hill is a never-ending responsibility that requires participation from physicians across all specialties. Let your voice be heard in Washington. **Register today!**

Reserve a room at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel by calling (800) 424-6835 or (202) 628-9100 or online at [www.washingtonintercontinental.com](http://www.washingtonintercontinental.com). Use Group Code MAS to reserve a room at the discounted rate of \$289/night. **The deadline to book a room at the Willard Intercontinental is Jan. 2, 2018.**

## Three steps for increasing medicine's influence

*The following is a summary of an article appearing in the Nov. 22 Rotunda*

From the outside looking in, the political process likely seems as inviting as a shark tank. Intimidating, confusing and frustrating are often used to describe advocacy-related interactions with government.

In his Gettysburg Address, President Abraham Lincoln famously opined our nation's form of government - "of the people, by the people, for the people." However, outcomes are typically directed by those choosing to engage government on issues important to them, and so government becomes "of the people, by the people, for the people [who choose to participate]."

### How physicians can participate

**Step 1: Join, join, join.** A significant portion of success is simply showing up, but most physicians don't have the time to spend traveling to Washington, DC, or Montgomery for Congressional or legislative meetings, hearings and sessions. But when like-minded people pool their resources good things can happen. Advocacy organizations (individual state medical societies, and state and national specialty societies) concerned with ensuring delivery of quality care and a positive practice and liability environment all deserve your support and membership.

**Step 2: Get to know a few key people.** Physicians are responsible for a lot, and in today's world especially, it's easy to get in a

routine and leave the job of representing the profession to someone else. While membership in organizations advocating for physicians helps fund advocacy operations, paying membership dues alone is not enough. Getting to know a few key people is not difficult, even if only by phone or email. In lawmakers' minds, there is no contact more important than one from a constituent.

**Step 3: Put your money where your mouth is.** Political action committees (PACs) help elect candidates physicians can work with on important issues. When it comes to PAC contributions, never underestimate the impact of even a small donation. Choosing not to participate in the political process is akin to getting sued, consciously sitting out voir dire and letting the plaintiff's lawyer pick the jury.

### Summary

The future of medical care rests with the men and women actually caring for patients every day. A representative democracy functions best when the electorate holds those elected to office accountable. Increasing medicine's ability to successfully advocate for physicians and the patients they serve will require increased participation in the political process. Physicians must join the organizations fighting for them, get to know their elected officials and contribute to PACs whose goals align with their own.

Read the full article at [alagastro.org](http://alagastro.org).



### Alabama Gastroenterological Society

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### Alabama Gastroenterological Society 2016-2018 Officers

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