

The American Medical Association House of Delegates met in Chicago from June 13-17, 2009. The highlight of the meeting was President Barack Obama 's address to the House of Delegates on Monday. The President spoke for almost an hour, and pledged to work with the AMA to reform the nation's health care system in a way that works best for patients and doctors. You can watch the speech or read the text of his remarks by following this link. (<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/our-people/house-delegates/2009-annual-meeting/speeches.shtml>)

J. James Rohack, MD, was inaugurated as the 164<sup>th</sup> President of the AMA. He and Immediate Past President Nancy Nielsen, have been very visible and very effective both at the White House and in Congress, representing patients and physicians in the ongoing health care reform debate.

The House of Delegates reviewed several hundred reports and resolutions dealing with issues as varied as Medicare payment reform, anti-trust reform, the patient-centered medical home, disaster preparedness education in medical schools, structural changes in how and when the House of Delegates meetings will occur in the future, and the use of Tasers by law enforcement. Highlights of the actions of the House include:

The AMA adopted CEJA Report 3, which sets ethical guidelines for physicians on how to handle a breach of patients' electronic health records. The report was based on physicians' dedication to prevent harm to patients, to respect patient privacy and autonomy, and to uphold trust in the patient-physician relationship.

The AMA adopted policy supporting health system reform alternatives that are consistent with AMA principles of pluralism, freedom of choice, freedom of practice and universal access for patients.

The AMA voted to adopt recommendations from the Council on Medical Service Report 8, which include supporting the patient-centered medical model as a way to provide care to patients without restricting access to specialty care and advocating that all health plans and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services use a single standard to determine whether a physician practice qualifies to be a patient-centered medical home.

After hearing strong and impassioned testimony, the AMA voted to include in its top advocacy priorities: 1) the enactment of federal legislation that ensures and protects the fundamental right of patients to privately contract with physicians, without penalties for doing so and regardless of payer, within the framework of free market principles, with the goal of accomplishing this by 2010, and 2) the restoration of fairness to the current health care marketplace through changes in statutes and regulations so that physicians are able to negotiate—individually and as defined groups—fair contracts with private sector and public sector health plans.

Furthermore, these recommendations call for continuing and intensifying efforts to educate employers, health care coalitions and the public about the potential risks and liabilities of pay-for-performance and public reporting programs that are not consistent with AMA policies, principles and guidelines.

Also demonstrated was a progress report on a web-based portal the AMA is developing for physicians that will offer clinical resources, point-of-care clinical references and patient education options from the nation's leading sources.

This portal will have practice management references like those in the AMA's "Appeal that Claim" campaign and tools to help navigate the claims process as well as assist with the financial infrastructure of a practice. It will also contain professional resources around ethics, continuing education and helping physicians enhance their careers.

For a more complete summary of the meeting highlights, go to <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/our-people/house-delegates/2009-annual-meeting.shtml>.

To hear the speeches by AMA leaders and by President Obama, go to <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/our-people/house-delegates/2009-annual-meeting/speeches.shtml>.

For news and AMA press releases on health system reform go to <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/legislation-advocacy/current-topics-advocacy/health-system-reform/hsr-news-statements.shtm>.

For a summary of the House of Delegates actions specifically addressing health system reform, download this document, the AMA Framework for Health System Reform: <http://www.rimed.org/pdf/200906amaframework.pdf>

If you are not receiving the AMA's weekly Health System Reform Bulletin, please sign up at <http://www.ama-assn.org/go/HSRbulletin>. If you are not receiving physician grassroots alerts please sign up at <http://capwiz.com/ama/mlm/signup>.

Encourage your patients to enroll in our Patients Grassroots Network by: <http://patientsactionnetwork.com/content/joinnow.aspx>

Together we will achieve meaningful health system reforms this year.