Report on Meetings with Physician Organizations

The Joint Task Force began an ongoing dialogue with physician organizations, including the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP). While communication is ongoing, the initial discussions were well received and several themes emerged. The physician organizations were interested in hearing about challenges facing PAs. While recognizing changes in the healthcare landscape, they were unaware of the challenges PAs face in the current marketplace. All appreciated the outreach, and understood the need for the PA profession to plan for its future. Overall they were complimentary and expressed their appreciation for PAs. The communication reinforced that the JTF proposal is not an AAPA policy and there was no request for their endorsement. The objective for these discussions was to have an opening conversation and develop a plan for continuing dialog. In all cases this was achieved.

AAPA’s CEO contacted the AMA CEO in January, and discussed the market forces and legal limitations impacting the PA profession, as well as the task given to the JTF by the AAPA Board and HOD Officers. The AMA CEO expressed his appreciation for the outreach, noting that PAs are “valued partners for physicians.” They agreed to continue the dialogue at the staff level. In follow up, AAPA staff contacted AMA staff and briefed them on the JTF proposal. Communication at the staff level is collegial and ongoing.

Also in January, AAPA’s CEO contacted the AOA CEO, provided an overview of the issues, and suggested a follow up meeting between AOA and AAPA senior staff. This meeting was held in mid-February, and the challenges the profession faces were discussed, as well as the task given to the JTF. AOA staff noted that osteopathic physicians want to be included in care teams. AAPA and AOA continue to work closely together at the staff level.

AAPA Board members and senior staff met with the president, immediate past-president, CEO and senior staff from the American Academy of Family Physicians in late February. Although none of the AAFP representatives had personally experienced PAs being disadvantaged in the market, they concurred that physician practice groups were becoming larger and more physicians were becoming employees, rather than employers. They noted family physicians’ strong ties to PAs, as well as the history of the two organizations placing a high value on a sustained relationship between the professions.

AAPA’s liaison to the American Academy of Dermatology and leaders from the Society of Derm PAs met with staff and elected leaders from the American Academy of Dermatology in early March. The PAs described their commitment to team practice, as well as the need to respond to market forces and their impact on the PA profession. The dermatologists raised concerns about the potential for independent practice by PAs. Although AAD leaders understand the market forces, they remain concerned about PAs practicing independently without dermatologists.

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AAPA has official liaisons to 22 medical and surgical organizations. In a conference call, the liaisons have were briefed on the Joint Task Force proposal, and a continued dialogue has occurred on the Liaison Huddle.

Messages tailored for physicians are being prepared. Like AAPA, each physician organization has its own policies and it is impossible to know how physician groups will respond to any policy changes that may ultimately be adopted by the HOD. To date, each physician organization contacted has reaffirmed its positive views of the PA profession and its role in medicine, and has expressed a willingness to continue an open dialogue about the marketplace challenges facing PAs and what may be required to overcome them.

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