What’s Inside

01. TMA-Led Scope of Practice Coalition
TMA proactively organized a coalition of the state’s largest medical specialty societies to promote physician-led, team-based healthcare delivery in Tennessee.

02. 2020 Legislative Priorities
Priorities include scope of practice, balance billing, telemedicine and Tennessee’s professional privilege tax.

03. TMA Engages in Federal Advocacy on Surprise Medical Billing
TMA is making sure Tennessee physicians have a voice in federal policies affecting healthcare in our state.

Updated Proper Prescribing Course
New course includes opioid laws updated in 2019 and meets two-hour prescribing CME requirement.

Register now for Day on the Hill
Join us in Nashville, Wednesday, March 25 for our annual lobbying day. tnmed.org/dayonthehill

2020 Membership Renewal
Renew your 2020 TMA membership dues online now with new flexible payment options.
In the most recent member satisfaction survey, we asked physicians how they prefer to receive information from TMA. While 90% of respondents said email, print was the next most preferred – over social media, text or any other form of modern communication.

Doctors are busy, and the bombardment of information from an increasing number and variety of sources makes it difficult for TMA to break through and reach physicians. But TMA is working for us every day and we need to stay connected to what’s happening outside our practices, regardless of where or how we choose to read it.

The farewell issue of Tennessee Medicine magazine shipped in September, after more than a century of scientific articles, news and editorials. This debut issue of Topline starts a new era of more concise, semi-monthly newsletters highlighting the latest TMA advocacy, programs and services for Tennessee physicians. We hope you find it informative, and encourage you to share it liberally with your nonmember physician colleagues as a tool to help persuade them to join.

Staff will continue to make improvements in the coming months, but we encourage your initial feedback. Send comments to communications@tnmed.org.

Thank you for your membership and support.

Elise C. Denneny, MD | 2019-2020 President

TMA’s 2020 Legislative Priorities

SCOPE OF PRACTICE: TMA for years has led advocacy efforts to keep Tennessee physicians supervising patient care and prevent inappropriate scope of practice expansion for midlevel healthcare providers. Advance practice nurses and physician assistants have been unsuccessful in their attempts to change state laws to achieve independent practice in Tennessee, and TMA remains steadfast in advocating for policies that improve and strengthen interprofessional relationships, not weaken them. TMA is leading a coalition of medical specialty societies and other healthcare organizations promoting physician-led, team-based healthcare delivery teams as the best model for patient safety and quality of care. tnmed.org/scopeofpractice

BALANCE BILLING: While no related bills gained traction in the Tennessee General Assembly during the 2019 session, Congress is considering multiple proposals to protect patients from “surprise medical bills.” TMA continues to educate state and federal lawmakers on health plans’ narrow networks as the root cause of balance billing and advocate for a solution that frees patients from the financial burden of unexpected out-of-network charges while protecting physicians’ rights to choose how they practice and get paid appropriately for services they provide. tnmed.org/balancebilling

TELEHEALTH: TMA supported a 2019 bill to ensure telehealth services would be reimbursed at the same rates as in-office visits. The bill did not pass, but it helped advance the conversation about appropriate rules and reimbursement for technology that is critical to improving healthcare access across the state, particularly in rural, underserved areas. TMA will continue advocating for laws, rules and regulations that support telehealth as part of coordinated, integrated healthcare delivery and bring reimbursement on par with comparable in-person services.

TENNESSEE PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE TAX: Prior to adjourning the 2019 session in May, the General Assembly abruptly exempted several professions from paying the state’s professional privilege tax. Doctors are still required to pay the annual tax, along with lawyers, lobbyists and stock brokers. TMA has advocated for reduction or removal of the professional privilege tax for years and will continue working with state lawmakers on possible solutions.

Earlier this year, TMA was named the most influential advocacy organization on Capitol Hill. Learn more about TMA’s legislative advocacy at tnmed.org/legislative and follow TMA @tnmed and @tnmedonthehill.
More than 400 healthcare professionals gathered across the state in October for the inaugural Tennessee Healthcare Symposium. The symposium replaced TMA's annual Insurance Workshops with a more robust agenda combining health plans' fall expos and a full day of insurance-related educational content.

Attendees heard from experts on a variety of topics including TennCare, telemedicine and more. Numerous health plan representatives were on site for one-on-one time to answer questions on claims coding, claims filing disputes and appeals, policy changes, prior authorizations and more.

FALL LEGISLATIVE DINNERS:
- Upper Cumberland Medical Society — October 8, Cookeville
- Montgomery County Medical Society — October 29, Clarksville
- Williamson County Legislative Dinner — November 5, Franklin
- Region 8 — November 7, Jonesborough
- Region 2 — November 12, Jackson
- Wilson County Medical Society — November 19, Lebanon
- Stones River Academy of Medicine — December 9, Murfreesboro

Contact Doug Word, Director of Regional Development for more information. Doug.word@tnmed.org or 615.460.1678.

Inaugural Tennessee Healthcare Symposium Replaced TMA Insurance Workshops

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Attendees heard from experts on a variety of topics including TennCare, telemedicine and more. Numerous health plan representatives were on site for one-on-one time to answer questions on claims coding, claims filing disputes and appeals, policy changes, prior authorizations and more. tnmed.org/symposium

Donate to IMPACT Today!

IMPACT is a non-partisan, independent political action committee established by the Tennessee Medical Association to help elect and retain pro-medicine candidates. We need YOUR help to keep friends of medicine in the Tennessee General Assembly. tnmed.org/impact
TMA Engages in Federal Advocacy on Surprise Medical Billing

Congress in summer 2019 began considering multiple proposals to protect patients from surprise medical bills. While legislators in both chambers agree that the most important objective is protecting patients from unexpected charges for out-of-network care, some of the proposed legislation would amount to price fixing, more leverage for insurance companies and more heavy-handed government interference in the delivery of care.

As Congress works toward possible solutions, TMA has made sure that Tennessee physicians – particularly hospital-based radiologists, emergency doctors, anesthesiologists and pathologists who are most often affected by out-of-network billing situations – have a voice in federal policies affecting healthcare in our state.

Since late June, TMA has collaborated with national and state advocacy groups to organize grassroots outreach to lawmakers, and send a uniform message through a series of interviews and op-eds in state and national media outlets.

Regardless of whether Congress takes action in 2019, balance billing will be a top priority on TMA’s state-level legislative agenda in 2020. TMA will not waiver in its proactive advocacy for a solution that frees patients from the financial burden of unexpected out-of-network charges while protecting physicians’ rights to choose how they practice and get paid appropriately for services they provide.

Read more: tnmed.org/balancebilling

Bills under consideration in Congress

- H.R. 3502, the Protecting People from Surprise Medical Bills Act, co-sponsored by Rep. Phil Roe, MD of Tennessee, is modeled after a successful law in New York and offers the most promising framework for a positive solution.

- The “No Surprises Act” proposed by the House Energy and Commerce Committee is modeled after a failing California law and would harm physicians without addressing narrow health plan networks as the root cause of balance billing.

- S. 1895, the Lower Health Care Costs Act is co-sponsored by Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander. TMA leaders visited with Sen. Alexander in June 2019 to express concerns over aspects of the bill that would cause more physicians to be cut from health plan networks, create access issues, and ultimately increase costs for patients, but the veteran lawmaker has stood firm publicly in supporting the median rate concept.

CORPORATE PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

This partnership was developed to address the unique challenges facing physicians and medical practitioners in today’s financial environment. Strategic Financial Partners helps physicians plan for their personal financial futures, their practices and their families. SFP is TMA’s preferred partner for comprehensive investment management, financial planning, tax strategies, retirement and estate planning and all your insurance needs. strategicfinancialpartners.com
TMA-Led Coalition Focused on Scope of Practice

Advance practice nurses and physician assistants have been unsuccessful in their attempts to change state laws to achieve independent practice in Tennessee, but state lawmakers and regulators have grown tired of the perennial fight between doctors and midlevel providers and are looking for solutions in 2020.

TMA proactively organized a coalition of the state’s largest medical specialty societies and healthcare advocacy organizations in late 2018 to promote physician-led, team-based healthcare delivery in Tennessee. The Coalition for Collaborative Care has spent more than a year working on possible solutions to improve the state regulatory environment to support more efficient primary care, particularly in rural, underserved areas of the state, and develop a strategic, cohesive voice from the medical community.

The Coalition engaged nurses earlier this year in a good faith effort to avoid another legislative fight. Negotiations continue around possible rule changes that would improve physician-nurse collaboration, patient safety and quality of care, but TMA and other members of the Coalition remain firm in their opposition to inappropriate scope of practice expansion for midlevel providers.

TMA and other organizations in the Coalition are hopeful that the PAs and nurses will agree to a compromise and work with physicians to improve and strengthen interprofessional relationships, not weaken them.

Scope of practice is TMA’s top legislative priority in 2020, and TMA is prepared to file legislation on behalf of the Coalition in the event of an impasse with nurses or PAs. Read more at tnmed.org/scopeofpractice.

UPDATED Course: 

TMA’s new online video helps doctors meet BME requirements of two (2) CME hours of prescribing training.

In the proprietary, accredited course, “Appropriate Prescribing in Tennessee,” physicians and other healthcare professionals will engage in a comprehensive review of new definitions, laws and other regulatory changes affecting pain management.

TMA can also bring proper prescribing training directly to groups upon special request. To learn more, contact education@tnmed.org.

tnmed.org/prescribing

CME REMINDER

Physicians who renew their Tennessee medical license in 2020 must complete the 40 hours of CME required by the Board of Medical Examiners (BME) by December 31, 2019. The BME requirement includes an approved two-hour prescribing practices course with instruction in controlled substance prescribing and the treatment guidelines developed by the Department of Health.
TMA’s Ingram Institute for Physician Leadership was created to help train young physicians to become leaders on a healthcare team, in their profession and in the community. TMA facilitates two programs each year through the Institute: the introductory Physician Leadership Immersion Program and the in-depth Physician Leadership Lab.

The Lab is a multi-month course equipping physicians with the skills to become quality leaders in team care settings. The program focuses on improving the process for delivery of care through better clinical teamwork. Each physician participant undertakes a course project that allows him or her to directly apply the skills acquired in the Lab in a real-world environment, including in his or her own local clinical setting, to improve quality, safety and efficiency and reduce costs. Throughout the course, physicians participate in one-on-one coaching sessions about their projects and individual leadership growth.

New for 2020:
The Judgement Index ™ is a new section of the Leadership Lab. Unlike a personality test, the Judgement Index ™ teaches how individuals make decisions and identifies growth areas. This information is used to identify markers for potential burnout and to promote physician resiliency. Through the Lab, participants will create a leadership development plan, setting constructive goals for burnout prevention.

Both leadership programs are full for 2020, however TMA maintains a waiting list. Physicians interested in either program can apply at [tnmed.org/leadership](http://tnmed.org/leadership).

2020 Leadership Lab Dates

**Webinars, Wednesdays**

- January 15
- February 19
- May 13
- June 24

**Live Sessions**

- January 24-25
- April 3-4
- July 24-25

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**DOCTORS’ DAY ON THE HILL**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25**

**NASHVILLE | CORDELL HULL BUILDING**

Connect with your lawmakers and discuss major issues affecting healthcare in Tennessee like balance billing, scope of practice and much more!

*Free for all TMA members, spouses and office staff to attend.*

REGISTER at [tnmed.org/dayonthehill](http://tnmed.org/dayonthehill)

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“After only one and a half years on staff at my current hospital I have been unanimously nominated for chief of medical staff by the medical executive committee. They cited my leadership abilities and the Ingram Institute experience as a major determinate in their decision. Thank you so much for the invaluable training - I hope to continue using the skills I learned in my new role.”

Kelly McAvany, DO
New 401 (K) Plan for Members

Gain financial peace of mind for your future with the new TMA 401(k) plan, designed for member groups of any size.

How it Works
The TMA Multiple Employer 401(k) does all the heavy lifting for your practice. You maintain plan flexibility, while professionals manage investments, participant education and due diligence. You practice medicine, we manage your retirement plan.

Benefits

• Save on program fees with flat pricing and low institutional fund cost.

• Reduce administrative burden by eliminating annual audit, shifting plan trustee duties, and having a dedicated 3(38) fiduciary.

• Safe harbor provisions to maximize physician savings and streamline administration.

• Complete flexibility in plan design and profit sharing.

• Opportunity to have financial planners advise on 401(k).

Contact
Kevin Rainwater
krainwater@acgwealth.com
866.893.4103

HOW TMA CONVINCED A PAYER TO REVERSE A CREDENTIALING DECISION

Knoxville-based pain specialist Dr. Cynthia Niendorff decided in 2018 to leave her pain management clinic, which later closed under controversial circumstances, to open her own practice. But as she worked to establish an independent practice, Dr. Niendorff encountered network contract issues with a commercial payer that repeatedly refused credentials because of the association with her previous company.

Dr. Niendorff’s attempts to reason with the payers were unsuccessful and her patients were in jeopardy of losing access to pain management services after the previous clinic closed its doors. She became frustrated at the inability to connect with the proper people at the insurance company on her own, and at being continually denied network credentials despite a limited number of certified pain management specialists in the area.

Dr. Niendorff’s next step was to join TMA and ask for help.

TMA was able to escalate Dr. Niendorff’s problem to top decision makers within the health plan, facilitate communications, allow Dr. Niendorff to explain her case and ultimately persuade the payer to reverse its decision.

“My experience with TMA has been nothing short of professional, efficacious and instrumental in building my new practice. The TMA staff are liaisons between me and insurance companies, helping form meaningful contracts so I can manage my patients in network. I believe in the resources TMA has to offer because its support let to a successful outcome for me, my practice and my patients.”

Cynthia Niendorff, MD | Knoxville

When physicians have nowhere else to turn, TMA is the advocate and the liaison that solves contracting issues. tnmed.org/insurance

2020 Membership Dues Renewal

TMA is pleased to offer automated monthly or quarterly payments as a response to members who have asked for more flexibility and convenience in how they pay dues. Physicians who prefer to pay annually can continue doing so.

Renew by logging into your membership profile at tnmed.org.
We wanted to recognize and reward the loyalty and commitment of our policyholders. The Mutual Value Plan (MVP) is just one more way for us all to share the long-term success of our company.

Visit svmic.com/loyalty to enroll in or call us at 800.342.2239

LOYALTY AND COMMITMENT
that you can take to the bank.