



# Topline

Newsletter of the Tennessee Medical Association

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## Online Resource Tools Available for Members

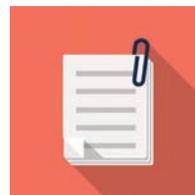
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# FROM *the* PRESIDENT

This month I had the opportunity to represent TMA and travel to Washington, D.C., to attend the American Medical Association's National Advocacy Conference. It was a great event, affording our organization the chance to meet face-to-face with federal legislators and advocate on important health policy issues.

While meeting with these policymakers and visiting colleagues, it struck me how many of our important priorities align with national issues.

Take Prior Authorization for example. In May, TMA's House of Delegates voted in favor of comprehensive prior authorization reform. Four primary goals were identified: reducing the number of medical and pharmacy services that require prior authorization; ensuring patients gain quicker access to care through the reduction of denials; streamlining the process to reduce burdens and retroactively denied payments; and supporting federal efforts to reform prior authorization for Medicare advantage and other government-regulated plans.

Likewise, Physician Wellness has been my top priority as president. In this session of the Tennessee General Assembly, TMA is aiming to enact safe harbor-reporting systems for medical professionals to prevent physician burnout and mitigate the risk of suicide. Currently in Tennessee, some health plans and hospital credentialing committees require physicians to disclose personal mental health information to be able to practice at facilities or serve on panels. These

requirements serve as barriers to physicians seeking mental health treatment, ultimately contributing to reduced professional performance, high turnover rates, and the adverse consequences of medical errors. We can do something to fix the problem.

Scope of Practice remains an issue in Tennessee and at the federal level. In coordination with the Coalition for Collaborative Care, TMA will again work to preserve Tennessee physicians' ability to lead patient care and oppose unsafe scope of practice expansion by mid-level providers. Because of our influence, advanced practice nurses and physician assistants have not succeeded in changing state laws to do away with team-based health care in Tennessee. TMA will continue to collaborate with its multi-specialty partners and members of the General Assembly to identify and develop solutions that increase healthcare access without compromising patient care.

Regarding the Balance Billing issue, Congress passed the No Surprises Act to protect patients from balance and surprise bills resulting from care received by out-of-network doctors. Unfortunately, federal implementation of the law has caused Tennesseans to have fewer in-network healthcare options and more out-of-pocket expenses. TMA will work this session to enact a fair state-level solution that ensures all health plans maintain adequate networks of facility-based physicians to assure the affordability, accessibility, transparency, and quality of healthcare services.

During my visit to Washington, I was reminded that one conversation between a doctor and legislator can impact the legislative process. In this spirit, I would like to extend an invitation directly to you, my fellow TMA member. If your schedule allows, consider banding together with your colleagues across the state for TMA's annual Day on the Hill on March 7 in Nashville.

Bus transportation is available in several parts of the state, appointments with legislators will be set in advance and free parking options are available. Additionally, TMA's government affairs team will provide expertise throughout the day and before the meeting with a Day on the Hill Primer webinar taking place March 1.

We have the best legislative team in the state, but political capital is in high demand this session. The best way to influence the outcomes we seek is by getting involved in the process. We need you, the true experts on these issues, to step in and advocate for the profession and your patients. You need not be a seasoned political pro to influence pro-medicine legislation. You only need to share your experience.

The time is now to jump in and make a difference.

*Edward W. Capparelli, M.D.*

Edward Capparelli, MD / 2022-2023 President



Top: From left to right, TMA President-Elect Andrew Watson, MD, Greta Manning, MD, Clarksville family medicine physician, TMA President Ed Capparelli, MD prepare to meet with members of the Tennessee congressional delegation in Washington, DC. Bottom: TMA leadership meets with U.S. Senator Marsha Blackburn.

# January Board of Trustees Meeting Recap

TMA's Board of Trustees conducted its first quarterly meeting of the year last month in Nashville. The following is a summary of discussions and actions taken. The next meeting of the full board is slated for April 14 prior to the 2023 TMA Annual Meeting and House of Delegates taking place at the Franklin Marriott Cool Springs.

- Approval of an operating budget for 2023
- Modifications to the 2023 legislative agenda
- Final approval of 2023-26 strategic plan priorities
- Market feedback on the state's recently invoked abortion "trigger" law

Additionally, the Board took the following actions:

- Approval of preliminary appointments to TMA committees beginning in April. Identified a need for more representation on the TMA PAC committee.
- Continuation of its investigations into current market activities to help address gun safety. Presentations by the National Rifle Association and Everytown USA were invited. The Board discussed utilizing the TMA Public Health Committee to create resources for medical practices to use with patients to promote proper gun storage, safety and responsible gun ownership.
- Discussed a desire for more local engagement with the more than 2,000 TMA resident members. Considerations included more standardized training classes and

resources to help resident members better prepare to transition to active full time practice and find practice positions to remain in the state.

- Approved TMA's legislative priorities for the 2023 Tennessee General Assembly. Topping the list of priorities are modification of the state's abortion "trigger" law, resulting legislation from the Senate's Scope of Practice summer study, relief from some health insurance prior authorization requirements, and a new safe harbor law to protect physicians who receive professional assistance for work burnout and wellbeing.
- Prioritization of activities to commence in 2023 for the Board's strategic plan. Strategic areas include:
  - Enhancement of TMA advocacy programs
  - Physician wellness
  - Organizational fiscal fitness
  - Growing Tennessee's physician workforce
  - Improvement of internal systems to better prioritize resources
- Approved questions for a brief membership survey as part of the 2023 TMA leadership elections taking place online in February.
- Selected the Embassy Suites and Conference Center in Murfreesboro for the 2024 TMA Annual Meeting and House of Delegates.

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## Polls Open for the 2023 TMA Leadership Election



The polls are open for TMA's Leadership Election and will close on Tuesday, Feb. 28 at 5 pm CT.

Members received a personal, secure ballot via email from [communications@tnmed.org](mailto:communications@tnmed.org)

with the subject line, "Cast Your Vote in the 2023 TMA Leadership Election" on Feb. 1. This election will secure the

organization's next President-Elect, four members of TMA's Board of Trustees and four members of the Judicial Council. Complete profiles of the candidates are available at [tnmed.org/elections](https://tnmed.org/elections). If you have any questions or concerns during the voting process, contact TMA at 615-385-2100.

After ballots are cast, voters are encouraged to participate in TMA's 2023 Membership Survey. We appreciate your willingness to share your perspective.

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## TMA Medical Banking Offers Easy Application Portal



For those pursuing or interested in joint ventures, our partner, TMA Medical Banking,

has designed an easy-to-use process in securing financing for physicians and groups of physicians' equity investments into Ambulatory Surgery Centers (ASCs) and Dialysis Center Joint Ventures.

TMA Medical Banking wants to make life easier for you. So, for your convenience, they added a streamlined online application portal specifically for financing the equity investment in an ASC or Dialysis Center Joint Venture for an individual seeking up to \$350,000 in financing. To learn more about this product and others offered by TMA Medical Banking, contact James Nicholson at 615-777-2173 or [jnicholson@insbank.com](mailto:jnicholson@insbank.com).

# Register Now for Annual Doctors' Day on the Hill



TMA's Doctor's Day on the Hill is set for Tuesday, March 7, and the deadline to register is fast approaching! This annual event gives members the chance to advocate directly with lawmakers about the critical healthcare issues affecting the practice of medicine.

Attendees will spend the day in Nashville at the Cordell Hull state office building lobbying lawmakers on TMA's 2023 policy agenda. Issues include: Balance Billing, Scope of Practice, Abortion "Trigger" Law, Prior Authorization and Physician Wellness.

This year will feature two registration locations: the first on

the eighth floor of the Cordell Hull state office building from 8-10 am CT, and a second (new this year) at Nissan Stadium between 7:30-9:15 am CT. Here attendees will enjoy free parking, coffee and networking with physician colleagues before receiving transportation to Cordell Hull state office building.

Lunch will be provided. In the afternoon, mingle with colleagues and legislators at a reception over coffee and ice cream.

The event is free and open to all TMA physician members, medical office staff and healthcare administrators, but registration is required. Lunch is provided and paid parking is reimbursed. Bus transportation for the event is available from the Tri-Cities, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Memphis and Jackson markets.

Don't miss your chance to fight for the issues that matter and make your voice heard. The deadline to register is March 4. Register and learn more about the event at [tnmed.org/day-on-the-hill](https://tnmed.org/day-on-the-hill). Contact Advocacy Engagement Manager Erika Thomas at [erika.thomas@tnmed.org](mailto:erika.thomas@tnmed.org) with any questions.

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## TMA's 2023 Doctor of the Day Program Volunteers

Each Tuesday during the legislative session, TMA members have the opportunity to volunteer their time to serve the needs of lawmakers and staff, witness the legislative process, and advocate for regulatory or policy issues in which they have interest.

Volunteers for TMA's 2023 Doctor of the Day program are:

- Jan. 31: Chris Turner, MD – Internal Medicine/Pediatrics, *Maury County Medical Society*
- Feb. 7: Colleen Schmitt, MD – Gastroenterology, *Chattanooga-Hamilton County Medical Society*
- Feb. 14: James McKenzie, DO, MBA – Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, *Nashville Academy of Medicine*
- Feb. 21: Sigrid Johnson, MD – Family Medicine, *Knoxville Academy of Medicine*
- Feb. 28: Jonathan Hughes, MD – Anesthesiology, *Sullivan County Medical Society*
- March 14: Howard Herrell, MD – Obstetrics and Gynecology, *Greene County Medical Society*
- March 21: Amanda Finley, DO – Internal Medicine, *Northwest Tennessee Academy of Medicine*
- March 28: Melissa Johnson, MD – Pulmonary Oncology, *Nashville Academy of Medicine*



Right: Dr. James McKenzie from Nashville with Rep. Bill Beck (D-Nashville).  
Left: Dr. Colleen Schmitt from Ooltewah with Sen. Bo Watson (R-Hixson).

- April 4: Michelle Cochran, MD – Psychiatry, *Nashville Academy of Medicine*
- April 11: Kristina Storck, MD – Obstetrics and Gynecology, *Nashville Academy of Medicine*
- April 18: Amy Brown, MD – Neurology, *Nashville Academy of Medicine*

Visit [tnmed.org/doctoroftheday](https://tnmed.org/doctoroftheday) for more information or contact Erika Thomas at [erika.thomas@tnmed.org](mailto:erika.thomas@tnmed.org) to secure a spot for 2024.

# Online Resource Tools Available for Members

TMA recently unveiled two new member resource pages on its website. The organization's TN Medical and Pharmaceutical Council brings physician leaders together with drug companies around common areas of agreement such as lowering the cost of medical care for patients. TMA has also partnered with prescription assistance programs designed to provide patients with savings on medications. TMA's Prescription Assistance Resource Center was designed to serve as a centralized source for members to access this information.

More than half of U.S. physicians experience burnout, and TMA has prioritized the issue behind the leadership of its president, Ed Capparelli, MD. TMA's new Wellness Resource Center was created to guide members toward national, statewide and regional programs that best fit their needs. It also features educational information and opportunities for legislative involvement.

## Prescription Assistance Resource Page

TMA created a Prescription Assistance webpage to highlight companies offering tools and resources to help physicians manage their patients' care by providing additional methods to acquire safe, affordable prescription medication. This resource page was developed through collaboration between TMA corporate partners and TMA's TN Medical and Pharmaceutical Council.

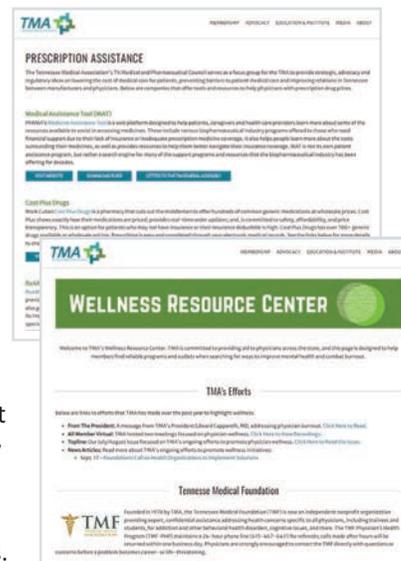
The council provides strategic, advocacy and regulatory recommendations with the goals of lowering the cost of medical care for patients, preventing barriers to care, and encouraging dialogue between manufacturers and physicians in Tennessee. View the resource page at [tnmed.org/pharmacy](https://tnmed.org/pharmacy) to learn more about PhRMA's Medicine Assistance Tool (MAT), Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drugs, and Rx4Miracles.

## Wellness Resource Center

Last year TMA's House of Delegates passed a resolution prioritizing physician wellness and focusing on raising awareness of the issue among the membership. It sought to increase availability statewide for access to mental health services for physicians. Additionally, TMA's Board of Trustees included physician wellness as a priority within its four-year strategic plan last month.

TMA's Wellness Resource Center—a repository spotlighting national, state and regional programs—has been unveiled as part of this effort. It aims to help physicians find the resources they need for themselves or colleagues, and features a bevy of educational resources including recordings of recent TMA All Member Virtual meetings on the topic of Physician Wellness hosted by Dr. Capparelli including representatives from the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation, Tennessee Medical Foundation and LifeBridge in Chattanooga.

The page will be continuously updated with resources and helpful information. Members may explore the site at [tnmed.org/wellness](https://tnmed.org/wellness). Contact [communications@tnmed.org](mailto:communications@tnmed.org) to share additional resources.



## IN MEMORIAM

We offer our prayers and deep gratitude for all passing members. Their positive impact on their patients and profession will last forever.

**R. Daniel Beauchamp, MD**, age 66, of the Nashville Academy of Medicine on Nov. 27, 2022.

**Joseph Calloway Boals, III, MD**, age 85, of the Memphis Medical Society on Dec. 31, 2022.

**Robert Paul Christopher, MD**, age 90, of the Memphis Medical Society on Dec. 8, 2022.

**Jeannine Archer Classen, MD**, age 88, of the Nashville Academy of Medicine on Nov. 15, 2022.

**William J. Freeman, MD**, age 88, on Oct. 23, 2022.

**David H. McConnell, MD**, age 83, on July 8, 2022.

**Thomas Earl Motley, Sr., MD**, age 83, of the Memphis Medical Society on Jan. 11, 2023.

**Hieu H. Pham, MD**, age 56, of the Memphis Medical Society on Feb. 24, 2022.

**Robert M. Strimer, Jr., MD**, age 80, of the Greene County Medical Society on Feb. 8, 2023.

**Jan Van Eys, MD**, age 93, of the Nashville Academy of Medicine on Sept. 29, 2022.

**Norma Bragg Walker, MD**, age 92, of the Knoxville Academy of Medicine on Dec. 12, 2022.

**Hershel P. Wall, MD**, age 87, of the Memphis Medical Society on Dec. 16, 2022.

# Taking a leap of faith in my career turned out to be the best for my patients and me

## How my organization, CenterWell Senior Primary Care, is bringing a personalized care team approach to care for seniors in Tennessee



**By Erica Savage-Jeter, M.D.,  
Family Physician and Divisional  
Chief Medical Officer, CenterWell  
Senior Primary Care**

We've all taken a leap of faith at some point in our lives. For me, it was switching from a traditional physician's practice to joining one that promised a care team approach. My curiosity about this approach opened my eyes to one of the best methods to keep my patients healthy while benefiting me personally as well. Working at CenterWell Senior Primary Care, I can have smaller patient panels with longer appointments, which allows me to foster relationships with my patients while maintaining a work-life balance.

It's no surprise that physician burnout has risen significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic began. In fact, a report published in Mayo Clinic Proceedings found a dramatic increase in physician burnout and decrease in satisfaction with work-life integration from 2020 to 2021 across the country, including in Nashville. With a recent study from the University of Chicago finding that doctors would need nearly 27 hours each day to provide guideline-recommended primary care, it's important that physicians know what options are available.

CenterWell is a fast-growing primary care medical group practice with a model of care that is holistic, senior-focused and fully engaged in our patients' lives. There are a variety of ways to treat patients, from hospitals to home-based care, but the care team model is something physicians should strongly consider, especially if they're contemplating leaving this profession because of burnout. For example, at CenterWell we have a team of doctors, social workers, behavioral specialists and other professionals who work together to provide comprehensive, personalized care to seniors. Because physicians have so much support, they can focus more on patient care, spending up to 40 minutes with each patient, which ultimately strengthens the doctor/patient connection and provides ample time to address any questions a patient may have.

The care team approach allows us to learn more about the lifestyle factors affecting a patient's health. For example, if a senior is having issues getting to the doctor or accessing nutritious food, a social worker can provide resources for transportation and food assistance. In addition, behavioral specialists assess and create a treatment plan for those who need mental health services and pharmacists help patients understand how to take their medications and minimize medication costs.

Having a personalized, senior-focused approach to care is becoming more important as the number of seniors in the area grows. In fact, a report found that the number of Tennessee seniors aged 60 and over is expected to increase by 30% from 1.6 million in 2020 to 2.1 million by 2040, and the number of those aged 80 and over in the state is forecast to double during this time.

**It is a rewarding experience to work with patients who appreciate the time you spend with them, but there are many other benefits to working for CenterWell. Following are five factors that stand out to me.**

**Mission-driven care.** I was intrigued by CenterWell's mission and the value-based approach to care. I trusted my instincts in joining the company, and it paid off. I am proud to be part of an organization that gives the best care to patients and promises to work to keep patients healthy and have better outcomes, which is the reason why I became a physician.

**Support.** At CenterWell we provide patients with the services of an integrated care team. Our patients are fortunate to have the clinical expertise of their PCP in addition to clinical pharmacists, care coach RNs, social workers, behavior health specialists and all our clinical support staff, and as a physician I am also fortunate to be supported by a great team.

**Relationships.** Having smaller patient panels and longer appointments allows me to build better relationships with my patients. In turn I feel more satisfaction in my job knowing my patients are being cared for in every aspect they need and getting better.

**Care.** At CenterWell, I have had so many of what I call success stories. I have had patients who would be labeled as "noncompliant" at other practices come to CenterWell, and once integrated into our care model, they've become healthier and adherent. One instance I am proud of is a patient who frequently missed appointments, to which we were alerted by the appointment analytics. Our team went into action and just months later the patient had reliable transportation to the office, affordable housing, healthy foods and his A1c normalized, all because of the type of care CenterWell allows us to give.

**Growth.** CenterWell, along with its sister brand, Conviva Care Center, operates 235 centers across 11 states and is the largest network of senior-focused primary care providers in the country, with plans for further expansion. This provides me with the opportunity to consider working in different locations and opportunities for my fellow physicians to experience the benefits of working for an organization that supports a care team model.

I am grateful for our robust clinical support team, which allows me to deliver quality care to seniors and do what I love while avoiding the burnout that so many physicians are feeling right now. CenterWell is a company that cares for patients as well as its employees, placing well-being at the top of the list for both groups.

CenterWell Senior Primary Care announced its entry into Nashville last year. The first center in the market will be located at 4901 Nolensville Pike and there are plans to open six additional centers in the Middle Tennessee area this year. More information on where each center will be located can be found at [CenterWellPrimaryCare.com](https://www.CenterWellPrimaryCare.com).

When I talk to others about CenterWell Senior Primary Care, they always say, "It sounds too good to be true," but it's not. If I can share my positive experience with my colleagues on this rewarding approach, I've done my part to help combat the challenges they are currently facing.



If you are a physician looking to take a leap of faith and switch careers, I encourage you to [visit CenterWellCareers.com](https://www.CenterWellCareers.com) to learn about our employment opportunities.

# Legal Briefs

## Law Guide Topic: Abortion

On June 24, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the longstanding *Roe v. Wade* decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. This immediately returned the ability to regulate abortion to the individual states. This decision caused confusion in Tennessee regarding when abortions can be performed and the prescribing of certain medicines. TMA's Law Guide topic on Tennessee's "trigger" law on abortion, which became effective Aug. 25, will help demystify the uncertainty around this ruling.

In addition, TMA's Abortion FAQs document is available at [tnmed.org/lawguide](https://tnmed.org/lawguide) to address specific questions the legal department has received from members. Member login is required. Review all resources carefully to fully understand what is legal in Tennessee. Send questions to [legal@tnmed.org](mailto:legal@tnmed.org).

## Prescription Laws

TMA's Law Guide topic, *Prescription Laws*, is a comprehensive document detailing the requirements for issuing and dispensing prescriptions, including material requirements, physician requirements, and reporting. It discusses in detail the requirements for issuing opioid prescriptions and the requirement to issue all controlled prescriptions electronically. It was recently updated to include the new federal law regarding the DEA-X waiver and prescribing buprenorphine. Visit [tnmed.org/lawguide](https://tnmed.org/lawguide) for more information.

## CSMD Query Requirements

Current Tennessee law requires a prescriber to check the Controlled Substance Monitoring Database before issuing a prescription for an opioid, benzodiazepine, or schedule II amphetamine. If you are unsure which circumstances require the database check or if believe you might be exempt from this requirement, review TMA's Law Guide topic, *Controlled Substance Database (section VII D. – F.)*, at [tnmed.org/lawguide](https://tnmed.org/lawguide).

## New Employee Reporting

Employers conducting business in Tennessee are required by state and federal law to report all newly hired and re-hired employees to the Tennessee Department of Human Services. This requirement is applicable regardless of the number of employees in a company. Information is placed into a database and used to help enforce child support orders and establish paternity. Read the Law Guide topic, *New Employee Reporting*, to learn when and how to report, and the penalties for noncompliance. Access this guide at [tnmed.org/lawguide](https://tnmed.org/lawguide). Member login required.

## License Renewal

A physician needs to make sure his or her license is renewed well before the expiration date. TMA recommends members set a reminder on their phone or ask a practice manager to remind them. If you cannot remember the expiration date, you may check it on the state's website at [apps.health.tn.gov/Licensure](https://apps.health.tn.gov/Licensure). To renew your license online, please visit [lars.tn.gov](https://lars.tn.gov).

## TMA's Legal Department

Member physicians and their staff may contact the TMA legal department with questions related to the legal or regulatory sides of medicine by calling 615.460.1645 or emailing [legal@tnmed.org](mailto:legal@tnmed.org). Members may also seek guidance regarding practice management issues.

Recent topics on which members requested legal department research include:

- a. Review of a practice's informed consent form with suggestions for appropriate content.
- b. Determination on whether or not the non-custodial parent of a child held the ability to consent to a medical procedure for the parent's minor child.
- c. A practice's requirements for properly handling money owed to a deceased patient.





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