I would like to thank my fellow members of the El Paso County Medical Society for the honor of electing me President of the Medical Society. I would like to thank Dr. Patricio Pazmino, our outgoing President and all the officers for their hard work and leadership this past year.

Our profession faces many challenges in the coming months and more than ever, we must be unified in our dedication to our patients and practices with the help of the medical society in conjunction with the Texas Medical Association. As in the previous 10 years we approach another Medicare reimbursement cut as part of the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) payment formula. The latest SGR patch expires Feb 28, 2014 and unless congress passes an extension, we may face a delay in processing our Medicare claims. There is news of late with the House and Senate recently advancing a bill that would eliminate the SGR permanently. In place it would provide a 0.5% payment increase each year through 2018, and leave the current payment system unchanged for 4 years. In 2018, a new Merit-Based Incentive Payment System will reportedly judge providers on quality, resource use, meaningful use of electronic health records (HER), and clinical practice improvement. If approved, we will see a continued move away from fee for service to so-called pay for performance.

In regards to Medicaid reimbursement in Texas, as part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), primary care physicians are to be receiving Medicaid fees for evaluation and management services and vaccinations at Medicare payment rates effective Jan. 1, 2013. However, to benefit from the fee increase, you must submit a signed self-attestation form to the state’s Medicaid claims payer, the Texas Medicaid and Healthcare Partnership (TMHP). The state has not set a deadline for returning attestation forms but will do so in the coming months. Once implemented qualified physicians should receive a lump-sum payment to cover the fee adjustment for eligible claims already made in 2013. If you have not done so, and the reports from the state indicate that 50% of eligible physicians have not submitted attestations, you should take this opportunity.

A looming deadline approaches on October 1, 2014 and that is the go-live date for implementing the International Classification of Disease 10th Revision (ICD-10) coding system. The new coding system is highly complex and will require receiving payment for patient services effective October 1. It is becoming increasingly clear that the financial and administrative requirements for our practices will be much higher than had been anticipated. Orga-
The El Paso County Medical Society would like to thank TMAIT (Texas Medical Association Insurance Trust), TMLT (Texas Medical Association Liability Trust), Sierra Providence Health Network and Highlands Regional Rehabilitation Hospital for their generous donations. We would like to thank Dr. David Palafox for being our photographer for this and many events.