Having just returned from the AMA House of Delegates meeting in Dallas Texas, I will briefly summarize what I believe to be the highlights relative to the El Paso physician community. I heard testimony submitted to Reference Committee B. Dr. Gary Floyd, Texas Delegation served on the committee. ICD-10 Resolution 204 asks insurance companies and governmental agencies to reimburse physicians for the extra cost of increasingly complex and mandatory changes in coding. Resolution 208 announces AMA’s opposition to the use of Stark law regulations to unfairly and arbitrarily cap or control physician compensation. Resolution 210 advocates that CMS suspend penalties to physicians and health care facilities for failure to meet meaningful use (MU) criteria at this time. Resolutions 215, 221 and 222 oppose insurance company policies that interfere with outpatient lab services, demand prior authorization and impose barriers to vaccine administration. Resolution 227 asked the AMA to convene a series of discussions about the 2015 Medicare Fee Schedule among all concerned specialty societies and appeal to CMS for delayed implementation of the fee schedule final rule pending in-depth study of the impact the rule will have on beneficiaries. The RVS Update Committee feedback was used to construct a 93 page list of recommendations to CMS regarding suggested changes. There was concern that these actions may delay payments to physicians and the resolution was not adopted.

Resolution 206 recommended that we monitor prescription drug prices and Medicare in light of striking market trends leading to skyrocketing prices to patients. Policy E.9.02 was reaffirmed: The Council on Ethics and Judicial Affairs discourages any agreement which restricts the right of a physician to practice medicine for a specified period of time or in a specified area upon termination of an employment, partnership or corporate agreement. It was reaffirmed that restrictive covenants are unethical if they are excessive in geographic scope or duration in the circumstances presented or if they fail to make reasonable accommodation of apatients choice of physician.

Late resolution 1003 from California addressed Genentechs notice to hospitals that it will restrict distribution of Avastin, Herceptin and Rituxan-AMA opposes this.

Several topics sparked controversy amongst the House of Delegates. Reference Committee F recommended study of the impact of physician unionization and long term effects of physician employment. Reference Committee J, chaired by Texas Delegation member Melissa J Garretson addressed Medicaid Enhanced Rates (Res 813), Modernizing Tricare Payment policies (Council on Medical Service Report 8, Non-Formulary Medications and the Part D Coverage Gap (Res 821), Medicare Coverage of Vaccines During Office Visits (Res 823) and Tetanus Vaccines (Res 824).

Please understand that the work of the AMA House of Delegates is vital to our survival. We work hard for the prosperity of physicians and the welfare of patients (particularly the Council on Medical Service). Please support us with your basic membership and AMPAC membership. I am honored to have been elected to this position and pledge to protect the interests of organized medicine.