

# Philadelphia Medicine



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## John F. X. Trevi retires as PCMS Executive Director



*Shailendra Vaidya, MD, PCMS president (center) and James Cristol, MD, chair of the Cristol Award Committee (right) present the 2007 Cristol Award to John F. X. Trevi in recognition of his 26 years of service to the Society.*

## Mark C. Austerberry named PCMS Executive Director



Effective December 1, 2007, Mark C. Austerberry is the Executive Director of PCMS replacing John F. X. Trevi, who retired after serving the Society since 1981.

Mr. Austerberry has served as Executive Director of the

Montgomery County Medical Society since 2001.

From 1991 to 2001 he had worked in the Montgomery County Health Department in community development and health education. Before that he was a volunteer in the Peace Corps in Tunisia, North Africa.

He lives in Barto, PA with his wife Linda and two daughters, Kaylee and Emily

## Guidelines for managing community associated methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus infections in school-age children

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health is issuing this health advisory to update clinicians on the appropriate medical management and disease control measures to limit transmission.

### Diagnosis

Clinically, skin and soft-tissue infections due to CA-MRSA present similarly to other infections caused by

non-resistant strains of *S. aureus*. Patients often present with furuncles, carbuncles, or abscesses, which may be self-described as a spider or insect bite. Clinicians are encouraged to collect appropriate specimens for culture and antimicrobial sensitivity testing from patients with one or more of the following:

- Open skin lesions > 1 cm in diameter

*Please see Guidelines on page 3*

## Contact your Congressmen to oppose Medicare payment cuts

Physicians are urged to contact their Congressmen and encourage them to stop Medicare funding cuts for physician services.

The AMA has stepped up its campaign against the Medicare funding cuts. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has proposed a 9.9% payment cut in 2008 and total cuts of 40% over the next eight years. During that time, physician practice costs are projected to increase by 20%.

Continued funding cuts could threaten senior citizens' access to healthcare, the AMA wrote in a letter to US Senate majority leader Harry Reid (D-Nevada).

## Medicaid reimbursement for some services increases

Physicians will see an increase in reimbursement on select Medicaid services. Certain E&M fees increased effective Nov. 1, 2007.

Eleven of the most frequently used mid to upper level visit and consultation codes increased. For example, Code 99205 (new patient office visit) increased from \$36.00 to \$80.00, and Code 99215 (established patient office visit) increased from \$36.00 to \$65.00.

Medicaid fees paid to Pennsylvania physicians are some of the lowest in the country and about half that of Medicare reimbursement levels. The program had gone without a comprehensive fee increase to physicians since the 1980s.

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215-563-5343, Ext. 101

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2100 Spring Garden Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19130  
Phone: (215) 563-5343  
E-mail: [stat@philamedsoc.org](mailto:stat@philamedsoc.org)  
Web site: [www.philamedsoc.org](http://www.philamedsoc.org)  
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## Editorial

### The medical litigation issue is still here

By Shailendra S. Vaidya, MD



Governor Ed Rendell came to Philadelphia recently to assert that medical malpractice litigation is no longer a problem in Pennsylvania. He called Pennsylvania a success story. He credited the legislative reforms passed in 2002 along with subsequent judicial and administrative reforms. He noted that the number of malpractice cases being filed and the cost of malpractice insurance continue to drop.

We applaud those who have brought about these reforms, including Governor Rendell. The climate is improving.

However, I agree with the many medical spokespersons and analysts who have observed that the problem is still here and we need more progress. Maternity wards continue to close. Chester County does not have even one emergency neurosurgeon.

Although there has been a recent decline in malpractice lawsuits, this comes after previous sharp increases. Pennsylvania's average physician liability payout is 60% higher than average payouts in the rest of the country. Per capita physician liability payouts in Pennsylvania are more than double the national average.

Pennsylvania is still in an unfavorable position when compared with other states. Our inability to retain and recruit physicians proves that. At a time when healthcare demand is increasing, our

physician supply is stagnant.

What is the next lawsuit reform that we need? The answer is clear. Pennsylvania now allows no limit whatsoever on non-economic awards. We need to cap the amount of non-economic awards

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for pain and suffering. Texas has done that and has seen its physician population increase.

Patient safety, adequate reimbursement, and scope of practice for non-physicians are some other issues still to be resolved.

These huge task cannot be done without your membership and strong support for the Philadelphia County and Pennsylvania Medical Societies, and PAMPAC. Too many of our fellow physicians are taking a free ride. They lament the Pennsylvania climate for medical practice, benefit from our successes, but then fail to become part of the solution.

We urge them to join hands with us so that we can speak with a unified voice for the vast majority of physicians.

*Dr. Vaidya is the president of PCMS.*

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## Philadelphia Cyberknife Center launched

US Radiosurgery, a Nashville, Tenn., company that operates stereotactic radiosurgery centers for cancer patients, has expanded into the Philadelphia region through a partnership with Crozer-Keystone Health System and a group of local physicians.

The partnership has established the Philadelphia Cyberknife Center, a facility in Havertown that is being run by US Radiosurgery as a department of Delaware County Memorial Hospi-

tal—a member of the Crozer-Keystone Health System.

Stereotactic radiosurgery is administered by a cyberknife, a device that combines robotics and computer-aided technology to deliver a high powered dose of radiation to the tumor site, while the radiation delivery system constantly tracks the location of the tumor and delivers radiation with sub-millimeter accuracy in order to protect surrounding healthy tissue.

### EPA honors four Philadelphia-area hospitals with First Trailblazer Award

EPA Regional Administrator Donald S. Welsh presented Trailblazer Awards to Abington Memorial Hospital, Albert Einstein Healthcare Network, Holy Redeemer Health System, and Thomas Jefferson University Hospital for their environmental leadership.

“As its name implies, this new award recognizes hospitals that are truly blazing the trail so that other hospitals may build on their success and implement similar programs a bit more easily,” Welsh said.

“These Philadelphia-area hospitals deserve credit for taking positive steps to reduce waste, improve indoor air quality, and invest in reusable rather than disposable products,” he added.

### Thomas Jefferson University unveils new \$60 million classroom building

The new building, named after Dorrance H. Hamilton, a longtime board member who donated \$25 million for the project, has simulation settings designed to train teams of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and occupational and physical therapists.

Like other medical schools, Jefferson is expanding—part of a national initiative to stave off predicted physician shortages—and it also is adding students in nursing and occupational and physical therapy, and has established a pharmacy school, which will accept its first class next fall.

Students in all the disciplines will train together in simulated patient-care situations in the Center City building, and also will learn some core parts of the curriculum together.

### St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children relaunches bone marrow transplant program

The former director of the pediatric bone marrow transplant program at St. Christopher’s left in 1998 amid the uncertainty clouding the future of the hospital at the time, when St. Christopher’s was part of the Pittsburgh-based Allegheny Health Education and Research Foundation, which went bankrupt in 1998 with more than \$1 billion in debt, and was taken over by Tenet.

As a result, St. Christopher’s needed to transfer about 70 cancer patients requiring bone marrow transplants to Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, or other facilities farther away, for the procedure.

For the past several months, hospital administrators have worked through the regulatory review process needed to relaunch the program.

### Guidelines, continued from page 1

- Abscesses
- Draining or purulent skin lesions
- Failure to improve from treatment with a beta-lactam antibiotic
- Signs and symptoms of systemic illness
- Epidemiologically linked to a cluster or if household transmission is suspected

### Recommendations for patient management include:

- Incision and drainage of purulent fluid from furuncles and abscesses
- Initiation of empiric antimicrobial therapy for patients with one of the following:
  - Severe or rapid progression of infection
  - Presence of associated cellulitis
  - Signs and symptoms of systemic illness
  - Presence of co-morbidities or immune suppression
  - Extremes of patient age
  - Abscess located in an area that is difficult to adequately drain
  - Lack of clinical response to incision and drainage alone

### Antibiotic selection

Selecting an appropriate antimicrobial agent should depend upon available culture and sensitivity data, and known

prevalence of MRSA in the patient population. Although the proportion of *S. aureus* isolates that are resistant to methicillin in the Philadelphia region is unknown, estimates based on review of local microbiology data suggest that it might range from 15-50%.

Thus, beta-lactam antibiotics may not be optimal for patients who require empirical treatment of skin or soft tissue infections of suspect *S. aureus* etiology. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests use of clindamycin, tetracyclines (for children >7 years, and non-pregnant patients), or trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole as first line empirical therapy.

### Reporting

Single cases of MRSA are not reportable in the City of Philadelphia. However, the Division of Disease Control requests that clusters of suspected CA-MRSA infection be reported within 24 hours.

To report clusters of CA-MRSA infection, call 215-685-6740 during normal business hours, or 215-676-1776 after hours, and ask to speak to the person on call for the Division.

In addition, disease control measures and school management guidelines appear on the PCMS website [www.philamedsoc.org](http://www.philamedsoc.org).

### Medical Protective Company seeks approval to acquire control of Millennium Insurance Company

Millennium of Newtown Square was established in 2004 by a group of business and insurance professionals as an alternative to risk retention groups

and reciprocal insurance exchanges being started by physicians as a means of coping with escalating malpractice insurance premiums. Unlike those types of insurers, Millennium did not require physicians to pay an initial capital contribution or upfront subscription fee to get coverage.

Among the partners that started Millennium were the Bucks County Physician Hospital Alliance, a partnership between Doylestown Hospital and the 300 members of the Doylestown Independent Practice Association.

#### Change of address?

Phone 215-563-5343, Ext. 102 with any change of address, phone, fax number, or e-mail address.

# pcms people

This page features PCMS members who were elected to office at the PMS Annual Meeting in October.



*Joyann Kroser, MD, (left) and Theodore Christopher, MD, were elected AMA Alternate Delegates.*

Shruti Tewari, MD, was elected AMA Resident/Fellow Alternate Delegate.  
  
Timothy J. Michals, MD, was re-elected to the PMS Judicial Council.



*Enrique Hernandez, MD, (left) was elected PMS First District Trustee representing Philadelphia and Chair of the PCMS Caucus. John Cacciamani, MD, was elected Vice Chair of the PCMS Caucus.*



*Daniel Will, MD, was elected Chair of the PMS Young Physicians Section.*

**PCMS people wanted!**  
Your colleagues would like to know what you're up to. Send news about academic or other appointments, achievements, awards, promotions, etc., to Philadelphia Medicine, 2100 Spring Garden St., Philadelphia, PA 19130

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