

Chair's report

John C. Jennings, MD

What is ACOG doing?

As we began the formation of District XI, I have been frequently asked questions beginning like this, "What is ACOG doing about ...?" Because ACOG does so much, it is difficult to give a simple answer. It is certainly worth explaining to our Texas Fellows at least some of what ACOG is doing. The operational mission statement of ACOG states clearly that "ACOG is a membership organization dedicated to the advancement of women's health through education, practice, research, and advocacy." The educational aspect of ACOG should be clearly visible to all our members. The Practice Bulletins, Committee Opinions, and patient education materials produced by ACOG are practical utilities for ob-gyns. Our Annual Clinical Meetings, district meetings, and section meetings are always impres-

sive displays of new information and technology for our specialty.

ACOG provides numerous programs and other measures to enhance the practice of ob-gyn. ACOG has always been at the forefront of promoting research in women's health and in the recognition and development of individual research accomplishments in our field. What ACOG does for our membership can certainly be appreciated, but equally, or even more important, is what ACOG does for our patients as the leading advocate for women's health.

In a time when health care issues are "top of mind" at all levels of government, ACOG continues to prioritize and inform government officials and the public about the important issues in women's health. Texas has successfully passed significant medical liability reform, but ACOG must provide a strong voice in other states still experiencing a medical liability crisis. Medicaid reform, increased funding for women's health research, the preservation

of reproductive health care services, the prevention of unintended pregnancy, and ensuring health outcomes for mothers and babies are all ACOG legislative priorities. One of our greatest challenges is care of the uninsured. Texas ranks among the states with the highest percentage in this category. ACOG has clearly stated support for universal coverage of pregnant women of whom 780,000 are currently uninsured.

The leadership of District XI is committed to informing all our members about the value of ACOG's programs, agendas, and other resources that are now even more available in Texas through our conversion to district status. So, if anyone asks you "What is ACOG doing?" the simple answer is "Everything we can to advance women's health." We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Annual District Meeting in Los Cabos, Mexico, September 25–28, with District VII and District VIII. ♦

Name this newsletter!

We need a name for our new District XI newsletter! We have already had some excellent suggestions such as "The Yellow Rose." The Junior Fellows have already named their newsletter the "District XI Junior Fellow Lone Star."

Please submit your suggestions to distxi@hotmail.com by early September. We will then have an online vote for the new name. We will profile you and your practice in the next newsletter if your submission is chosen. Texas is unique, and we want our newsletter to be as well! ♦

2008 Annual District Meeting

Join us in beautiful Mexico on September 25–28, at the Sheraton Hacienda del Mar Hotel and Resort in Los Cabos, Mexico. The meeting is a joint meeting with District VII and District VIII.

Program and registration information is located on the District XI website. Visit ACOG's home page, www.acog.org. Under "Quick Links" click on "ACOG Districts" and then "District XI." ♦



Junior Fellow chair's report

Christina G. Frome, MD

Greetings from the Junior Fellow officers of the new ACOG district, District XI! The first six months of our new district have proved to be very exciting and productive. Although our district is still in its infancy we have a full slate of Junior Fellow officers representing each of the five sections as well as a program representative at each residency program in the state. Some of our

goals for the upcoming year include:

- ▶ Increased participation of our Junior Fellows with the medical student interest groups
- ▶ Increased attendance and participation at the Annual District Meeting and Annual Spring Meeting/TAOG meeting
- ▶ The development of a Junior Fellow project in the district

The ADM will be held September 25–28, at the Sheraton Hacienda del Mar Hotel and Resort in Los Cabos, Mexico.

We will also be having our first official Junior Fellow Business Meeting at that time. If you plan on attending the meeting please register and book your hotel ASAP!

I am extremely excited to be working with all of you during our inaugural year as District XI. If you are interested in becoming more involved please feel free to contact me or any of your Junior Fellow officers at any time. Our contact information is listed on page 4 of this newsletter. ♦

Junior Fellow news

George D. Wendel Jr, MD, Junior Fellow advisor


Iwould like to join District XI Junior Fellow Chair Christina G. Frome, MD, in enthusiastically welcoming you as a District XI Junior Fellow! One of the many benefits of our new district will be increased opportunities for Junior Fellows to become involved in ACOG. Junior Fellows are the cornerstone of our specialty and are our future leaders.

There are 17 residency programs in our district, which is about 7% of the total programs in our specialty. There are 101 first-year resident positions in our district, which make up almost 9% of the positions nationally. Our programs share common interests in training, and each has unique perspectives that a state such as

Texas can provide. You are ably led by your three district officers: Dr. Frome, Kristy K. Ward, MD, and Ivvanee E. Martinez, MD. Our district is organized into five sections, and each of them now has a full compliment of local officers that elected to represent you. Your section chairs are George T. Barnett, MD; Mikaela D. Rush, MD; Ariel E. Holley, MD; Adi R. Abramovici, MD; and Luke A. Newton, MD. Please consider participating in ACOG activities. Check out the ACOG website under the Junior Fellows link for additional information. On the ACOG home page, www.acog.org, go to “Quick Links” then click on “Junior Fellows.” In addition, your representa-

tives will be developing resources on the District XI website that will have information specifically about Texas for you to read. We need your collective help to build an active district so please let your program representative, your section officers, or your district officers know of your interest. They will help foster your interest and put your talents to work. Their contact information is on page 4.

There are many challenges ahead building a new district, and I am sure there will be exciting new ideas that you will develop. I look forward to assisting you in any way possible as we move forward. I am honored to be your Junior Fellow advisor. ♦



Amy E. Young, MD, District Vice Chair and Editor
Joni E. Weber, Editorial Manager

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District XI officers and section officers at the first District XI Advisory Council meeting on March 25 in Fort Worth

Legislative update

Mignon McGarry, legislative advocate, and Ralph J. Anderson, MD, legislative liaison

With less than three months to go before the nation elects a new president, there is clarity at last in who is running in the presidential race. On the state level, the talk is primarily about taxes, Medicare/Medicaid, and medical liability reform.

Margins tax

The business activity tax in Texas, the margins tax, was payable for the first time on June 16. Physicians have certain exemptions in the computation of their taxable revenue. Specifically, this means that payments from Medicare, Medicaid, Workers Compensation, and other government programs should not be included in the tabulation of revenue for purposes of paying the margins tax. Moreover, the costs of providing indigent care are shielded from the tax.

The margins tax is coming under increasing scrutiny. There is a growing chorus of opposition to the margins tax from the likes of the independent business association. That opposition is expected to increase as the legislative session draws near. Additionally, there is a burgeoning, but noncohesive, coalition in the Legislature that is increasingly concerned about the margins tax. They are concerned partly because the margins tax is expected to be a campaign issue for state legislators in November.

There are already plans for a technical corrections bill in 2009 to alleviate the most pointed concerns of business interests, but this may provide an opening for the whole of the margins tax to be revisited. Please talk with your accountant or bookkeeper to ensure that your taxes are calculated correctly and that you don't overpay!

Medicare

In early July, Congress stopped the 10.6% Medicare physician payment cut and provided a 1.1% increase through 2009. The US House of Representatives had voted 355 to 59 in June to halt the cuts, but the Senate had earlier fallen one vote shy of the 60

votes needed to prevent a filibuster. President Bush made good on his promise to veto the bill, but Congress easily overrode his veto with more than the two-thirds majority needed. Even though physicians will now avoid payment cuts for the next 18 months, this measure is only temporary because every year Congress is faced with cuts to physician payments.

Medicaid

On June 17, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission held a hearing on new OB sonogram rates. The new rates would take effect September 1. Charles Brown, MD, president of the Texas Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, gathered information to submit to the HHSC. Due to some technical and funding issues, these codes were not increased last fall for OBs and family physicians that provide these services. The Texas Medical Association requested last October that HHSC reconsider its decision and the state agreed to do so.

Medical liability reform

The Texas Senate State Affairs Committee recently held a hearing in Austin to discuss the economic impact of medical liability reform in Texas. The Texas Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists attended the hearing and visited with various members of the committee to supplement the official testimony given by the physician community. Although much positive information was shared with the committee, it is obvious that our gains in medical liability reform will be under attack in 2009.

These attacks on medical liability reform will most likely include attempts to index the cap on noneconomic damages, adjust the cap for cost of living or inflationary expectations, and delete the "willful and wanton" standard of negligence that currently serves as the threshold in emergency care cases. ♦

District XI websites

Current news and information on women's health care in Texas can be found on the District XI website. Visit the District XI website by going to ACOG's home page, www.acog.org. Under "Quick Links" click on "ACOG Districts" then "District XI." News can also be found on the Texas Association of Ob-Gyns website, www.txobgyn.org. Please remember to use electronic correspondence to help your district save on postage costs. You may contact us through email at distxi@hotmail.com or taog@hotmail.com. ♦

Section 1 Annual Meeting

Section 1 is planning its first Annual Meeting in Odessa, September 19–20, at the MCM Elegante Hotel. Visit the District XI website by going to ACOG's home page, www.acog.org. Under "Quick Links" click on "ACOG Districts" then "District XI" to receive further information as it becomes available. Speakers include Bob L. Shull, MD; Edward R. Yeomans, MD; Susan M. Cox, MD; and Nanette F. Santoro, MD. ♦

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Calendar of Events

2008

September

- 19–20 Section 1 Annual Meeting
MCM Elegante Hotel
Odessa
- 25–28 Annual District Meeting
(Districts VII, VIII, and XI)
Sheraton Hacienda
del Mar Hotel
Los Cabos, Mexico

2009

April

- 2–5 TAOG/District XI
Joint Meeting
Renaissance Arboretum Hotel
Austin, TX

May

- 2–6 ACOG Annual Clinical Meeting
Chicago

September

- 9–11 Annual District Meeting
(Districts VII and XI)
San Antonio

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