ACR Board of Directors Meeting Summary

The ACR board of directors met Thursday, February 19 – Saturday, February 21, 2015 in Orlando, FL. The following is a summary of their actions and discussions.

**Advocating for Rheumatology**

The board of directors approved a comprehensive update of the ACR Health Policy Statements, developed to guide ACR advocacy activities by providing an overview of issues impacting the rheumatology community. For 2015 the top advocacy priorities of the ACR address (a) access to rheumatology through more appropriate valuation of care provided by rheumatologists; (b) access to treatment by reigning in excessive cost sharing associated with specialty medications; and (c) continued discovery of new cures and innovative treatments through sustainable increases in funding for medical research.

The ACR, working with a coalition, had been supporting the Flex-IT Act which would have changed 2015 to a 90-day reporting window, making it easier for ACR members to meet Stage 2 as well as giving members and software vendors time to upgrade or change systems. CMS announced that they will enact the provisions of this bill administratively. 2015 will be a 90-day reporting window year, with full details to come very soon. This is a big win for the ACR and its membership, but there is still much to do to reduce burdensome reporting. The ACR also continues to pursue safe harbor in regards to ICD-10, but members are advised to prepare for implementation beginning October 1st. Visit the [Legislative Action Center](#) to learn more about current bills and send a message to your lawmakers.

**RheumPAC**

RheumPAC, the ACR’s political action committee and the only PAC focused on the rheumatology profession, had an exceptional year in 2014. Thanks to the continued support and commitment of the ACR and ARHP membership, RheumPAC was able to raise over $135,000. With the increase in funds raised, RheumPAC was able to contribute over $113,000 to members of Congress. Every RheumPAC dollar went to supporting key advocacy work for the benefit of ACR and ARHP members and their patients. You can help RheumPAC maintain momentum and reach the 2015 goal of $150,000 by making a [contribution](#) today!

The board approved the appointment of Cristina Arriens, MD as the new Young Physician Representative to the AMA. Having representation in the Young Physician Section of the AMA provides the ACR with influence in the YPS and an additional voice in AMA policy deliberations, and allows the ACR to develop future prospective delegates who have built relationships and institutional expertise that add to the ACR’s influence in the House of Medicine. The board also approved sending an ACR Fellow-in-Training member to an AMA Resident/Fellow Section Meeting.

**Quality Initiatives**

The Committee on Quality of Care’s plan of work for the next fiscal year was approved and will include development of axial SpA quality measures and conceptual development of an outcome measure for rheumatology. The committee will also complete testing of RA and gout measures and will test GIOP measures in the ACR’s RISE registry. Several manuscripts related to ACR quality measure work will also be completed and submitted for publication.

New PMR, axial SpA and RA guidelines will be publicly available by summer, and work on GIOP and perioperative management guidelines will begin in the spring. A project to develop Lyme disease guidelines will get underway with a 30-day online [public comment period on the project plan](#) beginning March 9.
In addition, work continues on several criteria projects, with gout classification, myositis response and myositis classification criteria expected to be published this year. Vasculitis classification, MAS classification, and lupus classification projects are ongoing. Finally, the ACR will continue to focus on drug safety issues and active liaising with national quality and policy organizations on behalf of rheumatologists and rheumatology health professionals.

**The ACR and Your Practice**

*Position Statements*

The board approved new and modified position statements:

- Biosimilars – Updated
- Complexity of Biologics – New

ACR position statements represent the ACR’s stance on an issue that affects the rheumatology community and/or the patients rheumatologists treat. Position statements may be distributed to insurance companies, medical societies, members of Congress, regulatory agencies, patient organizations and other constituencies who may be affected by or who would be interested in the statements.

The Committee on Rheumatologic Care continues to work with carriers regarding the complexity of biologics issue, parenting with the Committee on Government Affairs on outreach efforts to Congress as well as reaching out to CMS to identify and mobilize CACs. Additionally, the Insurance Subcommittee is working diligently to address regional and national insurance issues, reaching out to the Carrier Medical Directors about complex chemo codes and getting a comprehensive list of the Contract Advisory Committee members. If you are having issues with insurance carriers please contact Meredith Strozier, director of practice.

**2015 Annual Meeting**

The 2015 ACR/ARHP Annual Meeting is November 6-11 in San Francisco, CA. More detailed information about this year’s annual meeting will be available in May at [www.acrannualmeeting.org](http://www.acrannualmeeting.org).

**Abstract Submission Opens:** May 4  
**Members Only Registration Opens:** May 27  
**General Registration Opens:** June 10  
**Abstract Submission Closes:** June 23 (noon ET)

**General ACR Business**

91 new candidates and 53 returning candidates for ACR membership and 36 new candidates and 11 returning candidates for ARHP membership were approved. With the approval of the members at the February board meeting, the ACR the total membership stands at over 9,400 members.

In order to meet the changing needs of the ACR membership and the health care environment, the Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest regularly reviews the ACR’s policies regarding ethics and conflict of interest and makes recommendations to modify these policies to the ACR Board of Directors. In February, the board approved modifications to the ACR [Code of Ethics](#). The ACR’s Code of Ethics applies to the entire ACR, including its Fellows, Members, and Staff.

**Other Reports of Interest**

The [Rheumatology Research Foundation](#) announced they have received a $1 million donation from practicing rheumatologist, Dr. Norman B. Gaylis, to fund physician-driven medical research through the establishment of the Norman B. Gaylis, MD Research Award for Rheumatologists in Community Practice. The Foundation continues to make great progress toward its $60 Million goal under the [Journey to Cure](#).
campaign. To date, the Foundation has raised over $52 million, or 87% of goal. 2015 marks the 30th anniversary of the Foundation and its mission is to advance research and training to improve the health of people with rheumatic disease.

The creation of a Division Director Special Committee was approved by the board. The committee is charged with developing programming, collecting and disseminating data, and facilitating communications among all US division directors for the purposes of strengthening training, clinical care and research in rheumatology.

As part of its 2013-2016 Strategic Plan, the ACR approved the formation of the Leadership Development Task Force to accomplish the goal of reshaping volunteerism in the ACR. The task force is chaired by ACR Secretary, David Daikh, MD, PhD and will meet in April to discuss a plan for a leadership development program. Additionally, the ACR approved the International Task Force’s final report and recommendations that align with Goal F of the ACR Strategic Plan to increase the ACR’s international outreach and presence. To meet this goal, the ACR International Task Force subcommittee was convened in May to develop recommendations that more fully engage international rheumatology practitioners and rheumatology health professionals and to improve their ACR/ARHP experience. Implementation of several strategies will begin later this year.

Important Deadline Information
The deadline to submit nominations for awards of distinction and masters designation is May 15, 2015. Click here for more information about requirements for the awards of distinction and masters.

Don’t forget to submit your application to be an ACR or Foundation volunteer. The deadline for volunteer nominations is June 1, 2015. Complete an application today for a colleague or for yourself.

The ACR board of directors will meet again May 14 – 15, 2015 in Washington, DC.