



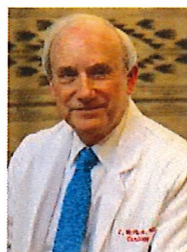
## Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Cardiology

Craig McPherson, MD, FACC, Governor  
Simon Flynn, Executive Director

Joseph Gnanaraj, MD, FACC, Sec-Treasurer  
Kevin Kett, MD, FACC Past-President

### CCACC Newsletter – Vol. 2021, Issue 1

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#### Greetings from the "Gov":

As summer draws to its meteorological close (who knows what weather will actually befall us) and the COVID-19 pandemic percolates on, I hope you are all staying safe and finding some pleasant activities to refresh and recharge. Remember to be mindful of your own mindfulness. ~ C. McP.

#### A few CCACC reminders:

1. Chapter elections: My term as State Governor/Chapter President will end in June 2023. You will soon receive e-mail notice to vote for the next CCACC president, who will serve as Governor-Elect beginning in May 2022. The two nominees are: **Brian Malm, MD, FACC**, who currently serves as Co-Chair of our Education Committee, and **Joseph Gnanaraj, MD, FACC**, our present chapter Secretary-Treasurer. Their full biographies will be included in the invitation you receive to cast vote. Voting will open on **September 20<sup>th</sup>** and close on October 8th – **please do vote!**
2. CCACC Annual Meeting: Our annual meeting will be held on **April 27, 2022**. After 2 years of virtual meetings (which have been quite successful), we do hope to hold an in-person event at **The Waterview**, in Monroe (pandemic permitting) to include an afternoon scientific session, an early evening cocktail reception and an evening (brief) business meeting followed by a keynote lecture (speaker will be announced when details are finalized). Please mark your 2022 calendar and plan to attend.
3. Council vacancies: We have 2 vacancies on the CCACC Council, the governing body of our chapter. If you have any interest in potentially serving, please contact me [[Craig.McPherson@bpthosp.org](mailto:Craig.McPherson@bpthosp.org)]. The only prerequisite is to be an ACC fellow (FACC). It's a great way to learn how the ACC works on behalf of the Cardiovascular Team and be in "the room where it happens."

#### Recent chapter happenings:

- Annual Meeting – April 14, 2021: Like all major meeting of the year, the meeting was a virtual event that included a scientific session, a brief business meeting and a keynote address from **Dipti Itchhaporia, MD, FACC**, who had just assumed her 1-year term as **ACC President**.

The Scientific Session was organized by **Brian Malm, MD** and **Kristin Bott, DNP**, co-chairs of the CCACC Education Committee. It consisted of 10 abstract presentations that were selected by a committee of abstract graders from 75 abstracts (13 original research, 62 case vignettes) submitted by 56 medical residents, 17 Cardiology fellows and 2 medical students from around the state: Bridgeport (5); CT Children's (3); Danbury (23); Greenwich (1); Hartford (6); Stamford (4); UConn (24); Waterbury (2); and Yale (9). The abstract session was masterfully organized and overseen by **Sara**

**Tabtabai, MD.** Presenters and abstract subjects were as follows (note that submission of projects concerned with aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic were specifically encouraged):

Presenter	Institution	Abstract Subject
F. Duarte Lau	Bridgeport	Unexpected cytology in a pericardial effusion
N. Robles	CT Children's	Ascending-descending aortic bypass for recurrent coarctation
R. Randhawa	UConn	Post-viral tamponade in a patient with COVID-19
M. Mizaei	Yale	Hemorrhagic tamponade in a patient with COVID-19
J. Bahgat	Stamford	Myopericarditis as a rare presentation of COVID infection
I. Uzochukwu	Danbury	Post-MI ventricular septal rupture during the COVID pandemic
S. Memon	Hartford	A rare case of platypnea-orthodeoxia syndrome
D. Gill	Hartford	Infective endocarditis following TAVR
K. Stawiariski	Bridgeport	Trends in CPR in a community hospital during COVID
Y. Yang	Yale	Impact of sex on TAVR outcomes

Dr. Itchhaporia gave an excellent review of cardiovascular risk factors in women. In thanks, we sent her a Connecticut State print that included some interesting trivia, much of which I (and, I'll bet, many of you) did not know.

*Speaking of Dr. Itchhaporia, you might want to join her for some educational, virtual coffee clutches:*



**Saturday, Sept. 25** | 10 – 11 a.m. ET  
Topic: Leadership and Team Building

What does it take to build a strong team and establish effective leadership? Hear from two-time women's water polo Olympic gold medalist and three-time World Champion Maddie Musselman and veteran US Navy SEAL and President of McChrystal Group Chris Fussell on their experiences being part of a successful organization.

**Register** by **Thursday, Sept. 23** {Ctrl + Click on "Register" to do so}

**Saturday, Oct. 2** | 10 – 11 a.m. ET  
Topic: Health Policy and Advocacy

Kick off ACC Legislative Conference 2021 weekend with a special Coffee With the ACC President featuring **Sen. Bill Cassidy, MD**, and **Rep. Ami Bera, MD**, discussing their experience and motivations for taking their mission of improving health care to Capitol Hill.

**Register** by **Thursday, Sept. 30** {Ctrl + Click on "Register" to do so}

- First (hopefully annual) Connecticut ACC and ACP Joint Conference: This virtual event was held on Saturday, May 22, 2021. Spearheaded by the organizational talents and energy of **Dr. Yanting Wang** and **Dr. Elissa Altin**, on behalf of the **CCACC Women in Cardiology Committee**, the symposium offered focused reviews of topics in Cardiology that are important to the Internal Medicine community. Keynote speakers were **Martha Gulati, MD**, Chief of Cardiology at University of Arizona (Phoenix), who reviewed aspects of heart disease in women, and **Robert Nardino, MD**, Internal Medicine Program Director at UConn and Past-Governor of the Connecticut Chapter of The ACP, who presented a practical approach to preoperative screening of patients at potential cardiovascular risk. These were followed by an ambitious program of "10-minute consults" on diverse topics of interest to cardiologists and internists:

Topic	Speaker (Institutional Affiliation)
HTN: When to screen for secondary causes	Tony Giamo, MD (Yale)
Non-statin rx for secondary prevention	Brian Malm, MD (Yale)
Fundamentals of stress testing	Parul Gandhi, MD (Yale)
Burning issues in atrial fibrillation	Craig McPherson, MD (Bridgeport)
HTN in women: unique factors	Amy Sharma, MD (Harvard)
Caring for oncology patients: Cardiology perspective	Irma Fotjadhi, MD (Bridgeport)
Updates in management of CHF	Sara Tabatabai, MD (St. Francis, Hartford)
Evolving therapies in heart failure	Eric Velazquez, MD (Yale)
Basics of valve disease	Bhaskar Arora, MD (Hartford)
TAVR: When to refer your patient	Hetal Mehta, MD (Yale)
Focused POCUS: Bedside echo for the Internist	Bradley Kay, MD (Yale)
Cardiovascular effects of COVID	Stephanie Saucier, MD (Hartford)
Cardiac adaptation to long-term exercise training	Antonio Fernandez, MD (Hartford)
Referral of women & minorities to clinical trials	Katherine Clark, MD (Yale)

### *Important news from ACC Central:*

- **First**, an important **reminder**: The annual **ACC LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE** is coming soon! On October 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>, there will be a series of meetings to inform ACC members of legislative issues that directly impact the practice of Cardiology. On October 5<sup>th</sup> we will hold meetings with staff members of our congressional representatives to discuss our concerns with them and to advocate, on behalf of our patients, for our senators and congressional representatives to support key pieces of legislation. This is an eye-opening experience – see how the wheels of legislation spin! And this year it will all occur virtually – no travel arrangements, no time away from home! I urge you to attend if you can (the more, the merrier). In order to attend, you must **register by Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup>** at the following link:

<https://www.acc.org/tools-and-practice-support/advocacy-at-the-acc/acc-legislative-conference/about-the-conference> [This will take you to information about the conference and

the link at which to register – “Save your spot now”. NB: Do not use Internet Explorer to register – it will not work; use Chrome, Microsoft Edge, Firefox, or Safari.

- **Second**, please plan to attend **ACC.22: The 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Scientific Session & Expo of The ACC**

Dates: April 2 – 4, 2022.

Location: Washington, DC Convention Center OR virtually

Registration:

- Exclusive Member Registration opens on Oct. 27, 2021;
- General Early Bird Registration opens on Nov. 10, 2021;

Abstract submission deadline: Oct. 13, 2021 @ 1 p.m. EDT,

Link to more information: [Learn more >>>](#)

*Included below are 2 issues about which ACC has raised concern (and are likely to be objects of discussion at The Legislative Conference):*

### 1. The CMS fee schedule for 2022:

The ACC recently released public **comments** on some aspects of the **Physician Fee Schedule that CMS has proposed for 2022**. Issues that will most significantly impact Cardiology practice are summarized in the brief message below. To read the full correspondence, hover over the phrase, “comment letter” in the first line, then click while holding down the Control key.

#### **ACC Comments on CMS 2022 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Proposed Rule (Sep 14, 2021 )**

The ACC has submitted a [comment letter](#) to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on the [proposed 2022 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule](#). The letter addresses payment policy and technical changes that drive payment for individual services, as well as other programmatic topics related the Quality Payment Program, Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) Value Pathways (MVPs) and others outlined for 2022.

The ACC recommends CMS not finalize two broad proposals that would have unintended consequences. The first would require billing of split/shared visits by physicians and advanced practice providers exclusively by time. The second would [increase practice expense costs for clinical staff labor](#) in a manner that precipitously reduces payment for other services. Proposed work relative value unit (RVU) reductions that result from [bundling several services involved in electrophysiology ablation](#) are also addressed in detail, with the ACC urging caution, accuracy and a phase-in of any significant reductions that may still occur.

The letter includes comments from the College on the first detailed proposals for MVPs that were included in this 2022 rulemaking cycle. The ACC supported efforts to streamline quality reporting and steps toward alternative payment models but urged caution in telling CMS the agency should not finalize a plan to sunset the existing MIPS program at the end of 2027 with a requirement for mandatory reporting through MVPs at this time. In a similar vein, the College expressed support for progress in the movement toward standardization in digital quality measurement but indicated that a move to full digital quality measurement reporting by 2025 places undue burdens and costs on the system and clinicians.

Finally, the ACC supported several narrower proposals, such as the removal of an outdated [national coverage determination](#) that has limited myocardial PET in some instances and delay of claims processing

system edits and the penalty phase of the Appropriate Use Criteria Program due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

CMS is expected to release the final 2022 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule rule by Nov. 2. Before that occurs, join your colleagues at [ACC's Legislative Conference, Oct. 3-5](#), to learn about current advocacy priorities and ensure your voice is heard by Congress.

## 2. This "Grassroots Action Alert" was sent out on September 17<sup>th</sup>:



### Grassroots Action Alert

On January 1, 2022, physician practices face an array of significant reductions due to a series of statutory and regulatory cuts. These potential reductions exacerbate financial uncertainty and further threaten patient care at a time when cardiovascular clinicians are still on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic and have seen many patients forgo or delay non-COVID care over the past 18 months. Individually, each of these reductions would be painful; taken together, they would be devastating.

- Expiration of the current reprieve from the 2% Medicare sequester created by the Budget Control Act of 2011, which now is expected to continue into 2031, despite being originally slated for sunset in 2021.
- Imposition of a 4% Statutory PAYGO sequester resulting from passage of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.
- Expiration of the congressionally enacted 3.75% temporary, public health emergency-linked increase in the Medicare physician fee schedule (PFS) conversion factor to avoid payment cuts associated with budget neutrality adjustments resulting from Medicare policy changes.
- Substantial reduction of roughly 25% for electrophysiology ablation services resulting from updated physician work values included in the proposed 2022 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (PFS).
- Practice expense decreases ranging from 5% to 20% for services such as echocardiography, advanced imaging and office-based vein therapies resulting from a necessary adjustment to clinical labor rates included in the proposed 2022 PFS.

The ACC has been actively engaged in communicating with Congress to convey how detrimental these cuts will be to patient care. Hearing the concerns of the physician community, several members of Congress have authored a sign-on letter, imploring their colleagues to take action to mitigate the impact of these draconian cuts.

[Please urge your member of Congress to join the Bera/Bucshon letter to avoid sudden and drastic cuts to cardiovascular care within Medicare.](#)

### *In closing:*

As I said at the outset, the COVID-19 pandemic percolates on. Fortunately, in our small, picturesque corner of the country, it has not (yet) again boiled over. The healthcare systems of Connecticut, and the Cardiology community team in particular, continues to provide high quality care to our citizens and they, thankfully, have (for the greater part) headed our advice to follow CDC guidelines and get vaccinated. I urge all of you to keep up the great work! As summer colorfully yields to fall, we can all take a smoke-free, not too humid, New England clear, deep breath and soldier onwards. As for me, hope springs eternal – I just became engaged –it's never too late to begin anew!

Warmest regards,

*~Craig*