



Make Your Voice Heard in Washington
Donate to NeurosurgeryPAC

Learn More >

Neurosurgeons Taking Action



American
Association of
Neurological
Surgeons

FACEBOOK

TWITTER

LINKEDIN

NEUROSURGERY
BLOG

ARCHIVES

Vol. 49, December 2016

[NeurosurgeryPAC](#) [AANS.org](#)

[View as a Web Page](#)

Neurosurgeons Taking Action is an E-newsletter from the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS). The purpose of this E-publication is to provide you with timely updates on socio-economic and political issues facing neurosurgeons. To ensure that our members stay on top of the issues that affect them, **Neurosurgeons Taking Action** is sent out when news and/or events warrant their attention.

Legislative Affairs

President Obama Signs 21st Century Cures Act Into Law [more...](#)

Neurosurgery and 600 Other Groups Urge Congress to Repeal IPAB [more...](#)

Neurosurgery Urges Congress to Reauthorize the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program [more...](#)

Neurosurgery Requests Funds to Address the Opioid Epidemic [more...](#)

NeurosurgeryPAC

Please Consider a Holiday "Gift" to NeurosurgeryPAC [more...](#)

Coding and Reimbursement

CMS Issues Final Coverage Decision for PILD Procedures for Lumbar Spinal Stenosis [more...](#)

October 2016 CPT Assistant Publishes Spine Coding Error [more...](#)

Quality Improvement

CMS Releases Updated Resources for EHR Incentive Programs for CY 2017 and Stage 3 [more...](#)

Of Note

Trump Nominates Rep. Tom Price as Next HHS Secretary [more...](#)

HHS Releases State-level Data on Impact of the Affordable Care Act [more...](#)

AMA Honors Katie O. Orrico with Lifetime Achievement Award [more...](#)

Communications

Neurosurgery Spotlited in Specialty Medicine On-call [more...](#)

Subscribe to Neurosurgery Blog Today! [more...](#)

Neurosurgeons Taking Action News

Legislative Affairs

President Obama Signs 21st Century Cures Act Into Law

On Nov. 30, 2016, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed H.R. 34, the 21st Century Cures Act, by a vote of [392-26](#), and on Dec. 7, 2016, the Senate followed suit with a [94-5](#) vote. On Dec. 13, 2016, President Obama signed the legislation into law ([P.L. 114-255](#)). The law provides approximately \$4.8 billion in medical research funding and makes significant changes to the manner in which the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reviews medical products. It also provides \$1 billion in funds to address the opioid crisis and contains several provisions to ensure health information technology interoperability, including efforts to prevent electronic health record (EHR) vendors from data blocking practices. Prior to its passage, the AANS and CNS sent a [letter](#) of support for the legislation. The AANS also joined forces with the Physician Clinical Registry Coalition (PCRC) to send letters to [House](#) and [Senate](#) leadership. Finally, neurosurgery issued a [press release](#) commending the passage of this important legislation as it provides significant investments to accelerate the discovery, development and delivery of new cures and treatments for all Americans.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

Neurosurgery and 600 Other Groups Urge Congress to Repeal IPAB

On Nov. 29, 2016, the AANS, CNS and several state neurosurgical societies joined the

[Healthcare Leadership Council](#) (HLC) — and more than 600 national and state-based health care organizations — in sending a [letter](#) urging Congress to repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB). The IPAB is a board of 15 unelected, and largely unaccountable, government bureaucrats whose primary purpose is to cut Medicare spending. Additionally, AANS president-elect **Alex B. Valadka**, MD, FAANS, participated on HLC's IPAB media telebriefing to discuss the coalition effort. His comments were picked up by a number of media outlets including [Medpage Today](#) and the [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#). Repealing the IPAB is one of organized neurosurgery's top legislative priorities.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

Neurosurgery Urges Congress to Reauthorize the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program

On Nov. 16, 2016, organized neurosurgery joined the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) and 44 other professional medical and public health advocacy groups in sending a [letter](#) to Congress regarding the Affordable Care Act's Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program. The program provides loan repayment in exchange for service in areas of medical need. Specifically, in return for participants agreeing to work full-time for at least two years in a pediatric medical specialty, including pediatric surgical specialties, in a medically underserved area, the program pays up to \$35,000 in loan repayment for each year of service for a maximum of three years. The letter stressed the need to reauthorize the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program as it will help to ameliorate workforce shortages. To that end, the groups called on Congress to support Section 722 of the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, [H.R. 2646](#), which reauthorizes the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program (PSLRP) and the group urge that this language be included in any final mental health conference package.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

Neurosurgery Requests Funds to Address the Opioid Epidemic

On Nov. 28, 2016, neurosurgery joined other medical groups in sending a [letter](#) to Congress requesting additional funding to address the opioid epidemic. In our letter, we urged lawmakers, "to provide the maximum possible allocation to fund not only the grant programs designated under the bipartisan Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) passed earlier this year, but to also substantially increase funding for much-needed prevention and treatment efforts for opioid misuse and related disorders."

If you have questions about these or other legislative issues, please contact Katie Orrico, director of the AANS/CNS Washington Office, at korrico@neurosurgery.org.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

NeurosurgeryPAC

Please Consider a Holiday "Gift" to NeurosurgeryPAC

So far this year, NeurosurgeryPAC has raised \$213,046 from 231 neurosurgeons. Thanks to all our contributors! We still have a long way to go to reach our \$250,000 fundraising goal for 2016. Please consider helping us reach this goal by giving NeurosurgeryPAC a holiday "gift." Contributing is easy and can be done online at MyAANS.org.

[Click here](#) for more information about NeurosurgeryPAC, including the current list of donors, candidates receiving NeurosurgeryPAC support and to read more about your PAC in action.

Editor's Note: AANS members who are citizens of the United States and pay dues or have voting privileges may contribute to NeurosurgeryPAC, as may AANS candidate members. All contributions must be drawn on personal accounts and any corporate contributions to NeurosurgeryPAC will be used for administrative expenses and other activities permissible under federal law. Contributions are not tax-deductible. Federal law requires NeurosurgeryPAC to use its best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation, and the name of the employer of every individual whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year.

If you have questions about NeurosurgeryPAC, please contact Adrienne Roberts, senior manager of legislative affairs in the AANS/CNS Washington Office, at aroberts@neurosurgery.org.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

Coding and Reimbursement

CMS Issues Final Coverage Decision for PILD Procedures for Lumbar Spinal Stenosis

On Dec. 7, 2016, the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) [issued](#) a final National Coverage Decision (NCD) on percutaneous image-guided lumbar decompression (PILD) procedures for lumbar spinal stenosis (LSS). On Oct. 7, 2016, the AANS and CNS sent a [letter](#) to CMS recommending that further study is needed before broadening coverage for this procedure. CMS agreed and will conduct a prospective longitudinal study of PILD procedures for LSS to determine whether PILD:

- Provides a clinically meaningful improvement of function;
- Provides a clinically significant reduction in pain; or
- Affects the overall clinical management of LSS and decision-making, including the use of other medical treatments or services, as compared to other treatments.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

October 2016 CPT Assistant Publishes Spine Coding Error

The October 2016 issue of the [CPT Assistant](#), an [American Medical Association](#) (AMA) publication which clarifies coding issues, contained an error in the Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) section, incorrectly stating that CPT codes 63047 and 22633 may not be reported together if performed at the same interspace. The AANS and CNS are working with AMA staff to ensure that a correction is published. CPT codes 63047 and 22633 may be reported at the same interspace when additional work is required to complete a decompression at a single spinal level. The work involved in CPT code 22633 is inclusive of the bone work necessary to provide access for an interbody fusion to be completed. When additional work is required to complete decompression, such as on the contralateral side of a given spinal segment where CPT code 22633 is performed, then CPT code 63047 should be reported. Medicare National Correct Coding Initiative (CCI) edits continue to prohibit the use of these codes at the same interspace — a CCI edit to which organized neurosurgery has

voiced strong objections.

If you have any questions regarding these, or other reimbursement issues, please contact Cathy Hill, AANS/CNS senior manager for regulatory affairs, at chill@neurosurgery.org.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

Quality Improvement

CMS Releases Updated Resources for EHR Incentive Programs for CY 2017 and Stage 3

On Dec. 5, 2016, the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) released updated resources for eligible professionals (EPs) to participate successfully in the Medicare and Medicaid [Electronic Health Record \(EHR\) Incentive Programs](#). As previously reported, the [Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015](#) (MACRA) and Hospital Outpatient Prospective Payment System (OPPS) and Ambulatory Surgical Center (ASC) Payment System [final rules](#) include provisions that will affect the EHR Incentive Programs in 2017 and beyond. [Click here](#) for updated information and resources based on changes to these programs.

If you have any questions regarding this, or other quality-related issues, please contact Rachel Groman, Vice President for Clinical Affairs and Quality Improvement at Hart Health Strategies, at rgroman@hhs.com.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

Of Note

Trump Nominates Rep. Tom Price as Next HHS Secretary

On Nov. 29, 2016, President-elect Donald Trump nominated Rep. **Tom Price**, MD (R-Ga.), to lead the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS). Throughout his time in Congress, Dr. Price, an orthopaedic surgeon, has been a staunch advocate for the preservation of the doctor-patient relationship, a fierce protector of private practice and a stalwart supporter of academic medicine. On Nov. 30, 2016, organized neurosurgery issued a [statement](#) strongly supporting the nomination of Dr. Price to become the next Secretary of HHS and urged the Senate to confirm him to this important position swiftly.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

HHS Releases State-level Data on Impact of the Affordable Care Act

On Dec. 13, 2016, the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) released an extensive compilation of state-level data illustrating the impact of the [Affordable Care Act](#) (ACA) on health care. To read the comprehensive report, [click here](#).

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

AMA Honors Katie O. Orrico with Lifetime Achievement Award

In November 2016, the [American Medical Association](#) (AMA) awarded **Katie O. Orrico**, JD, director of the AANS and CNS Washington Office, with the [Medical Executive Lifetime Achievement Award](#). The award honors a medical association executive who has contributed substantially to the goals and ideals of the medical profession.

"A coalition builder, Katie Orrico has demonstrated time and again throughout her career a timeless commitment to patients and physicians alike," said AMA President Andrew W. Gurman, MD. "Respected by colleagues for her leadership, mentorship and library of knowledge on policy, legislation and government operations, she is a workhorse for a healthier tomorrow."

Congratulations, Katie!

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

Communications

Neurosurgery Spotlited in Specialty Medicine On-call

In November 2016, the [Alliance of Specialty Medicine](#) featured neurosurgery in its fall 2016 e-newsletter [On-Call](#). The publication was circulated to all members of Congress, select media and others. Each issue spotlights a specialty, and this issue looks at neurosurgery and concussions; drawing on a previous post we featured on Neurosurgery Blog about this topic. It is yet another way in which we try to get our advocacy messages out to policymakers, media and the general public.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

Subscribe to Neurosurgery Blog Today!

The mission of [Neurosurgery Blog](#) is to investigate and report on how healthcare policy affects patients, physicians and medical practice and to illustrate how the art and science of neurosurgery encompass much more than brain surgery. Over the past few months, Neurosurgery Blog has ramped up its reporting efforts to include multiple guest blog posts from key thought leaders and members of the neurosurgical community. We invite you to visit the blog and subscribe to it, as well as connect with us on our various social media platforms. This will allow you to keep up with the many health-policy activities happening in the nation's capital and beyond the Beltway.

- [Neurosurgery Blog: More Than Just Brain Surgery](#)
- [Neurosurgery's Twitter Feed: @Neurosurgery](#)
- [Neurosurgery's Facebook Page](#)
- [Neurosurgery's LinkedIn Group](#)
- [Neurosurgery's YouTube Channel](#)
- [Neurosurgery's Google+ Page](#)
- [Neurosurgery's Tumblr Page](#)

If you are interested in these communications activities, please contact Alison Dye,

AANS/CNS senior manager of communications, at adye@neurosurgery.org.

[[top of news page](#)] [[headlines](#)]

[View as a Web Page](#)

Please add Neurosurgeons Taking Action
to your email address book
or Safe Sender List to ensure delivery.

You may change your email address by logging in to MyAANS.org with your username and password
and changing your profile preferences. [Click here](#) to unsubscribe.

Questions or comments? Please contact Katie Orrico at 202-446-2024 or
korrico@neurosurgery.org.

© Copyright 2016 AANS. All rights reserved.