Dear NJPCAC Member:

In the popular arcade game “Whack-A-Mole,” players try to whack moles popping out of their holes each time they appear. The longer the game goes on the faster the moles appear and the more difficult it is to whack them back into their holes. In the two-player and multi-player versions, it is a little easier because you have help.

Often that is how it feels with the New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition (NJPCAC) and the many issues confronting us as practicing physicians. Just when you feel like you have whacked one issue (a proposed moratorium on new radiation facilities, for example) back in its hole, a new mole (the USPSTF recommendation on PSA testing for example) appears and has to be whacked back into its hole.

That is why I am so grateful that we have formed a “team” and are able to play “Whack-A-Mole” together in a kind of multi-player version. The NJPCAC team has been able to successfully manage the many issues confronting us no matter how fast and how furious they emerge.

I give credit to the coalition and the team we have assembled. We are all busy between surgeries, consults, staff meetings, our families and other activities. Sometimes it seems like there is just not enough time in the day. But with the coalition, there is always someone who is willing to step forward to attend a meeting in Trenton; or a fundraiser in Newark; or manage an important event like the Great Prostate Cancer Challenge which took place in Camden this past September. Kudos and eternal gratitude to Adam Perzin and his staff, particularly Nicola Howard, for their many hours of work on this fabulous event. Delaware Valley Urology won the NJPCAC challenge to see which group would have the most participants and the Coalition made an additional $500 contribution on their behalf. (Please see the article on p. 3.)

This will be our last quarterly newsletter until the new year, so I want to wish everyone a wonderful holiday season. Together, I know we will have a fabulous New Year in 2012!

Sincerely,

Dr. David Taylor
President & Chairman
New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition

The New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition (NJPCAC) was organized to promote and represent the common interests of urological care physicians in the State of New Jersey who are dedicated to the highest standards of practice and focused on addressing the challenges that confront our healthcare system. NJPCAC’s membership includes nearly 200 practicing urologists and scores of additional healthcare professionals, including radiation oncologists, pathologists, nurses and administrative staff, that have come together to educate policy makers, regulators, insurers and other key stakeholders, including patients and peers about regulatory changes that will adversely affect the quality and accessibility to care provided to patients in New Jersey and those that will advance care in New Jersey. NJPCAC promotes and pursues educational, legislative and regulatory interests that are common to these urological care physicians and the advancement of patient care and access in the State of New Jersey.
NJPCAC Speaks Out Against New Federal PSA Testing Recommendation

Last month, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) released new recommendations concerning prostate cancer testing. The task force determined that performing prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood tests in healthy, symptom-free men is unnecessary. This recommendation comes on the heels of an attempt to get rid of mammograms for women ages 40-49 in 2009 (which Congress quickly shot down).

NJPCAC doctors took immediate action against this faulty recommendation. Members were quick to point out that the USPSTF does not contain a single urologist or oncologist, and they have no new studies on which to base their latest recommendation. As urologists, Coalition members have valuable experience with prostate cancer patients and know that early detection is the first step toward beating this disease.

Banning PSA testing would severely cut chances of catching prostate cancer in the early stages. Successful outcomes depend on early detection when it comes to this cancer, the number two cause of cancer death in American men. In fact, studies show that although the incidences of prostate cancer have remained stable since 1994, the death rate of patients has decreased by nearly 40% in that time. This is surely due in part to PSA tests and early detection.

Our members quickly mobilized to speak out against the USPSTF recommendation. Press releases and fact sheets on the issue went out to patients and legislators across the state, urging them to support PSA testing for all men, regardless of symptoms. Op-eds by Dr. David Taylor, President of the Coalition, and Dr. Adam Perzin, Board member, were distributed to newspapers in North and South Jersey. NJPCAC also reached out to the Medical Society of New Jersey and the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute for support. Both op-eds are available on our website (www.njpcac.org) or by clicking the links below.

Read Dr. Taylor’s op-ed here.
Read Dr. Perzin’s op-ed here.

NJPCAC meets with Governor Christie

On September 20th, NJPCAC President and Chairman David Taylor met with New Jersey Governor Chris Christie at a breakfast to discuss healthcare and other issues in New Jersey. Only a total of 15 attendees were permitted at this exclusive event. The Governor allowed everyone a brief introduction and then proceeded to a roundtable discussion.

Governor Christie also outlined his agenda for the coming year, which has three goals:

1. Lower taxes
2. Decrease regulation
3. Tort reform

Governor Christie confirmed that he will be making a push for medical malpractice reform during the next Legislative session. As a former medical malpractice defense attorney, Governor Christie fully understands tort reform. He will be counting on groups such as the New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition for support on this important issue affecting everyone in the healthcare community.

Dr. Taylor was also able to get an audience from the governor in order to explain the Coalition’s goals of preserving the integrated patient care model and patient choice, keeping government out of the patient/doctor relationship, and allowing free market forces to keep healthcare cost-effective.

Governor Christie seemed receptive to the Coalition’s issues and requested help in getting his agenda passed in the Legislature as well. Dr. Taylor felt there was a positive rapport between the doctors and the governor.
What a Day! What a Race!

First New Jersey Great Prostate Cancer Challenge Huge Success!

More than 600 runners, walkers and volunteers participated in the Great Prostate Cancer Challenge that took place Sunday, September 25th in Camden, New Jersey. Over 230 runners of all ages – from 10 to 76 – participated in the Challenge’s 5K race, and more than 300 walked 1 mile to raise funds to fight prostate cancer. Also in attendance were family members, friends, patients, numerous survivors and community members. Delaware Valley Urology took honors for the New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition by having the most participants.

“Prostate cancer affects one out of every six men and will kill nearly 30,000 in this coming year alone,” said Dr. Adam Perzin, Race Chairman and President of Delaware Valley Urology. “All of the funds raised by this event will go towards reducing that number to ZERO in our lifetime through research, advocacy and awareness.”

The vision for the race was born from NJPCAC’s longstanding commitment to advancing both the quality and accessibility of cancer care to the patients of New Jersey. In its role as the leading advocate for promoting patient choice, NJPCAC partnered with the nationally recognized leader in prostate cancer fundraising, Project Zero, to create an event not previously seen in the Garden State. Over the past year, hundreds of physicians and healthcare employees from the largest urology groups in the state worked tirelessly to create an event that would elevate the public awareness of this important disease, and also celebrate the battle that so many patients have waged and won.

The Camden race was one of 27 races that are taking place across the country and will have close to 12,000 people running to raise awareness and funds for prostate cancer. All funds raised by the Great Prostate Cancer Challenge will go to ZERO — The Project to End Prostate Cancer and their mission of eliminating prostate cancer deaths. ZERO has helped screen over 100,000 men since the program’s inception in 2002.

The day started with a visit from the Phillie Phanatic at the Camden Riversharks stadium. Both the 5K race and 1 mile walk kicked off at 9 am. The race ended with an awards ceremony at the stadium. Prizes were given for the top three overall male and female competitors and the top three in 8 different age groups.
Coming in first place overall for the 5K was Raymond Negron, age 17, of Camden with a time of 17 minutes 48 seconds, followed by second and third place winners Robert JR Pederson, 13, of Brick and Jeff Samanlonis, 42, of Blackwood. The female first-place finisher was 11-year-old Addisen Antonucci of Mays Landing with a time of 22 minutes 38 seconds. Sylvia Smith, 44, of Haddonfield and Melissa Rivera, 17, of Camden rounded out the top three women.

Many people who came out to take the Challenge were survivors of prostate cancer, family members or friends of someone who has prostate cancer.

“So many of us know someone who has prostate cancer,” said Dr. David Taylor, President and Chairman of the New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition. “The great thing about this event is that we are raising money to help people get free screenings and to educate people about prostate cancer. Early detection is so important. I’m proud to be a part of this day.”

The Camden Great Prostate Cancer Challenge raised over $100,000 so far, with additional funds still coming in.

“We are so thankful for everyone who came out today to take the Great Prostate Cancer Challenge,” said Dr. Perzin “The money we raised will help reach our goal of ZERO prostate cancer deaths in the future. We look forward to next year’s event, and hope it is as successful as today!”
NJPCA PAC Update

With all 120 seats up for grabs in the coming general election, it has been a very busy season for NJPCA Political Action Committee.

On September 14th, we hosted a fundraiser in Burlington City for the Chairman of the Assembly Health Committee, Dr. Herb Conaway. The event (see photos) was attended by nearly two dozen NJPCAC members and was a huge success.

The PAC was supportive of each and every member of the Senate and Assembly Health Committees as well as members of leadership in both houses and on both sides of the political aisle.

Attendance at these events afforded NJPCAC the opportunity to not only introduce our Coalition to members of the Legislature (and to Governor Chris Christie as well! - see separate story), but to advocate for our issues.

Our PAC activities included meetings with the Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver, the Senate President Stephen Sweeney, an exclusive breakfast with the Republican Leader in the Senate, Tom Kean, Jr., and a special fundraiser for the Republican Leader in the Assembly, Alex DeCroce, and his entire caucus in New Brunswick. Next year will be considerably slower for our PAC activities as Legislative elections are only held once every two years. The following year, 2013, however will be even more hectic with the Legislative elections AND a gubernatorial election.

NJPCA PAC has proven to be an invaluable tool in our mission “to promote and represent the common interests of urological care physicians in the State of New Jersey who are dedicated to the highest standards of practice and focused on addressing the challenges that confront our healthcare system.”
Advocacy Update

Beware the Ducks!

By Donald Sico
Donald Sico & Co. LLC

As the old saying goes, “If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck.” The post-election legislative session that will take place in Trenton following the November elections is looking, swimming and quacking more and more like a duck - a duck of the lame variety.

The so-called “Lame Duck” session will begin the day after the election (November 9th) until the end of the Second Session of the 214th Legislature at Noon on Tuesday January 10th, when the 215th Legislature will be seated, or until the Senate President and Assembly Speaker close the session “sine die” (which comes from the Latin phrase meaning "without day" and means "without assigning a day for a further meeting or hearing.")

The phrase lame duck does not even have its origins in politics. It was first used in the 18th century to describe brokers who defaulted on their debts at the London Stock Exchange. It was later used to describe presidents, governors and legislators who had lost their race at the November elections but were still in power until the newly elected officials were sworn in. Today it is commonly used to refer to any legislative session or term following an election until a new term or legislature begins.

So what kind of lame duck session can we expect under the Golden Dome at the State House in Trenton this year? Some are saying that because the expectation is that the same leaders will be in charge in the next legislative session (Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver, Senate President Stephen Sweeney and Governor Chris Christie), that there will not be a push to get a lot done. Others are saying that because so little was accomplished from the time the budget was enacted last June to the elections in November, that legislators and the governor will be anxious to move an ambitious agenda.

Regardless of one’s view it is always best to be “ever vigilant” during a lame duck session and this holds true for issues affecting the New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition as well. NJPCAC will be keeping a close eye on the following issues:

S1837 (Gordon) Imposes two-year moratorium on certain new outpatient radiation oncology services and establishes Outpatient Radiation Oncology Services Task Force in DHSS. NJPCAC opposes this bill which is on second reading in the Senate and is ready for a vote by the full Senate. It has received no action in the Assembly.

A3378 (Schaer) "Healthcare Transparency and Disclosure Act." NJPCAC has been working with Assemblyman Gary Schaer on this legislation, the so-called “Out of Network” bill. The bill passed the Assembly last January (with the minimum number of votes needed for passage - 41) and has received no action in the Senate, where a similar bill is sponsored by Senator Joseph Vitale. NJPCAC will monitor this bill closely during the lame duck session.

S2780 (Vitale) Requires surgical practices to be licensed by DHSS as ambulatory care facilities. This bill passed the Senate in June and has received no further action in the Assembly, where it is sponsored by the Chair of the Assembly Health Committee, Dr. Herb Conaway. NJPCAC supports the intent of this legislation and has been working with Senator Vitale, Chairman Conaway and the Governor’s office to avoid “unintended consequences” which would unnecessarily restrict physicians. In all likelihood, this legislation will make its way to the Governor’s desk some time during the lame duck session.

Finally, NJPCAC will be looking to the legislators and the Governor for support on the PSA testing issue. We will be notifying NJPCAC members of action on this topic in the coming weeks.
At Request of NJPCAC, Governor Chris Christie Proclaims September "Prostate Cancer Awareness Month" in New Jersey

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Proclamation

WHEREAS, prostate cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths in New Jersey and the most common cancer in men; and

WHEREAS, one in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in his lifetime; this figure increases to one in five for African-American men; and

WHEREAS, according to the American Cancer Society, approximately 7,840 New Jersey men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2011 and of that number roughly 1,100 will die; and

WHEREAS, African American men have the highest prostate cancer rates in the world and are twice as likely to die from prostate cancer as any other group; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey ranks ninth in the nation for men diagnosed with prostate cancer; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJCEED) Program urges all men age 45 and over to undergo screenings for prostate cancer and those who have a family history of prostate cancer and African-American men should do so at an even younger age; and

WHEREAS, more funding for research, patient education and advocacy is essential to reduce the number of men diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer, and programs to educate the public about the need for early detection and prevention is an important means of generating such funding; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, CHRIS CHRISTIE, Governor of the State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim:

SEPTEMBER 2011
AS
PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

in New Jersey.

GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this first day of September in the year two thousand eleven, the two hundred thirty-sixth year of the Independence of the United States.

Lt. GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR
Calling All New Jersey Urologists

We are always looking to expand the New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition because we understand there is “strength in numbers.”

We recently completed a mailing to every urologist in the State of New Jersey and asked them to join our growing Coalition. If you know of a colleague who is not a member, please invite him or her to join and to take a look at our webpage (www.njpcac.org) for additional information. There is also a membership application form on the webpage they can use to contact us if they want to join.

New Jersey Patient Care and Access Coalition

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