

2019 ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS



Food allergy research funding

The AAAAI sponsored a May 21, 2019 Congressional Food Allergy Research Briefing, co-hosted with Representative Ro Khanna (D-CA) and Representative Phil Roe, MD (R-TN), and featuring Emmy, a patient advocate for food allergy research. The briefing, coupled with AAAAI Hill visits and ongoing collaborative efforts with other organizations, led to increased federal funding for food allergy research. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease received an increase of \$362 million, with House Committee Report language directing “further investment” in the Consortium of Food Allergy Research. The Department of Defense Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program also received a \$10 million boost to its program budget and reinstated food allergy as one of the conditions included.



Penicillin allergy education and evaluation

- In February, 2019 AAAAI Executive Vice President Thomas Fleisher MD, FAAAAI briefed members of Congress regarding the merits of penicillin allergy testing as a means of antibiotic stewardship during the Stakeholder Forum on Antimicrobial Resistance Hill Day.
- On November 1, the AAAAI hosted a Congressional Briefing, “Antibiotic Resistance: The Merits of Penicillin Allergy Education and Evaluation,” featuring AAAAI President David M. Lang, MD, FAAAAI with Rich Dexter, Co-Chair, Advocates Council and Board Member, Peggy Lillis Foundation; David Hyun, MD, Senior Officer, Antibiotic Resistance Project, The Pew Charitable Trusts; and, Emily Sydnor Spivak, MD, MHS, FIDSA, Vice Chair, Infectious Diseases Society of America Antimicrobial Resistance Committee, and Medical Director, Antimicrobial Stewardship Programs, University of Utah Hospital and VA Salt Lake City Health Care System.
- In subsequent federal appropriations, Congressional report language included a directive that “encourages FDA to accelerate the review of penicillin allergy skin tests to address the serious and growing problem of antibiotic resistance.”
- The Presidential Advisory Council on Combatting Anti-Resistant Bacteria (PACCARB) invited David Khan, MD, FAAAAI to present at its February 26-27, 2020 meeting regarding penicillin allergy testing as an important component of antibiotic stewardship.



2019 AAAAI Advocate Award

During Hill visits on November 1, 2019, AAAAI leaders presented a new award, The AAAAI Advocate Award, “*In recognition of outstanding service in advocacy that has helped to meet the needs of our physicians and our patients,*” to the following members of Congress: House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD); Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA); Rep. Phil Roe, MD (R-TN); Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT); and, Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO).

In support of its mission to advance the knowledge and practice of allergy, asthma and immunology for optimal patient care the AAAAI continually endeavors to create effective and visible platforms for advocacy on issues involving the specialty and its patients.

2019 ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

H.R. 2468, the School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program

- The School-Based Asthma, Allergy and Anaphylaxis Management Program (SAMPRO™), is sponsored by the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, and developed in collaboration with other stakeholders. The School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act H.R. 2468 has been introduced in the 116th Congress to further provide support for the implementation of SAMPRO™.
- On October 31, AAAAI members met with members of Congress to discuss H.R. 2468, the School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program.
- On January 8, 2020, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America testified before the House Energy & Commerce, Health Subcommittee, and the AAAAI submitted written testimony. Subcommittee Chairwoman Eshoo commented, *“Children should be able to go to school feeling secure that their school can handle an asthma attack or an allergic reaction. This is not the case today.”*
- It is anticipated that H.R. 2468 will be marked up by the Health Subcommittee, the full House Energy & Commerce Committee, and ultimately scheduled for a floor vote. It is currently co-sponsored by 43 bi-partisan members and supported by a number of advocacy organizations through the Childhood Asthma Leadership Coalition.



Payer Relations

Members of the AAAAI Office of Practice Management reviewed more than 750 Allergy/Immunology payer policy changes in 2019 on a wide range of issues impacting patient access and physician reimbursement. More than 350 letters were sent to payers including Blue Cross Blue Shield, Aetna, UnitedHealth Care, state Medicaid administrators and others, many resulting in modifications and/or reversals of the policy issues addressed by the AAAAI.

Physician Reimbursement

- The AAAAI submitted comments to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) in response to its proposed 2020 Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) and Quality Payment Program. The CMS 2020 PFS conversion factor is \$36.0896, a 0.14% increase over the CY 2019 conversion factor. The CY 2020 Allergy/Immunology impact on total allowed charges of all the Relative Value Unit (RVU) changes is 0%. The estimated CY 2021 Allergy/Immunology impact associated with implementing the RVU Update Committee (RUC) recommended work values for the office/outpatient E/M codes, as well as the revalued HCPCS add-on G-codes for primary care and certain types of specialty visits is 7%.
- Hart Health Strategies staff provided expert analysis and an overview of related revisions to Evaluation and Management (E/M), and chronic care management codes and CMS Recovery Audits during a January 14 CMS Coding/RAC Webinar.

Quality Payment Program

- The Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) permitted a 0.5% annual increase in the Physician Fee Schedule from 2015 through 2019. It will impose a 6-year freeze on fee updates from 2020 through 2025. The AAAAI continues to vigorously engage in Quality Payment Program (QPP) reforms to address concerns about the program and maximize the participation of allergists/immunologists in the transition to value based payment.
- The AAAAI Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Quality Clinical Data Registry in collaboration with ArborMetrix is CMS-approved for Merit Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) reporting. The AAAAI QCDR is the only MIPS reporting option with Allergy/Immunology specialty measures available and offers 20 AMA PRA Category 1 CME Credits™ and satisfies the requirements for Part IV of the ABAI Maintenance of Certification program.

United States Pharmacopeia (USP) Chapter <797> Allergen Extract Guidelines

The Compounding Corner, a new online training module, aims to ensure a smooth transition to compliance with the anticipated United States Pharmacopeia (USP) Chapter 797 standards. Offered free of charge and with open access, it covers specifications for where compounding of allergen extracts must occur and related maintenance, personnel qualifications, hand hygiene and garbing procedures and documentation. CME credit is available for those who complete the module.

