

8th District Council Report June 20, 2024

1. **New Executive Director:** The Medical Society of Erie County (MSCE) welcomed its new Executive Director, Kathleen Van De Loo, on April 15, 2025. Kathleen's first eight weeks were devoted to organizational structure, stakeholder relations, advocacy projects, and new approaches to MSCE communications and member-engagement.
2. **Highmark Provider Support and Claims Processing:** MSCE's Board of Directors, Practice Management Committee and IPA Coalition wrote Highmark to express serious concern regarding changes to provider support and claims processing. The negative impact of these changes on member physicians and their ability to provide quality care to patients has reached an untenable level. The concerns raised by our physicians fall into four key areas:

Claims Processing and Payment Issues: Our members have reported numerous instances of aged claims, erroneous denials, and inaccuracies in payment from Highmark. These issues not only create financial strain for physicians and their practices but also lead to delays in patient care. As one physician shared, "Aged claims... correlate to concerns about quality measures and impact monthly payments."

Communication and Support: The removal of dedicated representatives who previously provided support to physicians' offices has left our members feeling isolated and unsupported. Physicians rely on timely assistance to navigate complex issues such as prior authorizations, claim reconsiderations, and downloading EOBs. The reliance on electronic communication channels, particularly Availity, has proven to be inefficient and cumbersome, further exacerbating the challenges faced by our members.

Quality Measure Reporting: Highmark's refusal to accept medical records submissions for quality measures, coupled with incorrect claims processing, has led to significant challenges in accurately reporting on quality metrics. Physicians are concerned these discrepancies will impact their monthly payments and compromise patient care. As one member stated, "All the other major carriers accept medical records uploads... Highmark needs to follow suit."

Data Accuracy and Reporting: Physicians have expressed frustration over the inaccuracies in patient rosters which subsequently impact their accountability for quality metrics. Additionally, concerns have been raised regarding the cumbersome nature of Availity reporting tools and the potential impact of recent cyber-attacks on data reporting timelines.

Highmark has responded by agreeing to meet with MSCE leadership in July.

3. **Medical Student Interns:** MSCE is in year two of its Medical Student Internship Program in partnership with UB Medical School (Jacobs School of Medicine) whereby Medical Student Interns were selected by the MSCE Board to participate in a 4-week internship program at MSCE. During the course of each session, interns learn about the resolution process, draft their own resolution for consideration for submission to next year's MSSNY HOD, and shadow medical professionals in half-day rotations to experience firsthand a glimpse into the lives of practicing physicians.
4. **Committee Engagement Grows:** MSCE's DEI, Practice Management and Women Physicians are growing in reach and scope. MSCE just welcomed Past President, Kate Grimm, MD, as its new Legislative Committee Chair. MSCE Officers meet in early August to review committee structure and take steps to align committee and task force work with society goals.
5. **New Logo and Communications Plan:** MSCE rolled out its new logo in April, as well as its new weekly eNewsletter. The Medical Society is also taking a planned approach to its social media engagement and reviewing other online tools for internal membership communication.
6. **New Office Near Medical Campus:** MSCE is moving its offices to downtown Buffalo, closer to the medical campus. The Board of Directors approved the move last Tuesday, after holding its in-person meeting at the new space.
7. **MSCE Programming:** On May 12, 2024, MSCE held a **Women Physicians Brunch** in recognition of Western New York's women physician, celebration of its seven past presidents (in 203 years), and in an effort to begin a dialogue with early career professionals on pathways to success and leadership in the medical field.

On **June 27**, MSCE will hold its **New Physician Summer Soiree** in Buffalo,

using a “speed dating” format to engage our physicians and build relationships with our long-standing leaders in the medical community.

MSCE's **Golf Tournament** has special meaning this year as we partner with Crisis Services and the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Erie County in support of grant that will provide physician training with the goal of addressing the disparity of men being referred for crisis prevention treatment.