Prior auth bill progresses in Senate, stalls in House
An MMA-backed bill that will help patients get needed medication in a timelier manner and reduce the hassles physicians face with prior authorization continues to live on in the Senate.
Sen. Melisa Franzen (DFL-Edina) amended her bill (SF 934) in an attempt to address critics and reduce the cost to the state associated with it, while keeping elements critical to protecting patients. So far, the House version of the bill has not been heard in committee despite vigorous efforts by the MMA and the Fix PA Now coalition.
"We continue to be disappointed that the House did not hear this important issue in committee," says Dave Renner, MMA director of state and federal legislation. "But we're continuing to work with legislators who want to fix PA now."

Bill to fight drug abuse with PMP gains traction
Legislators remain interested in finding solutions to the issue of prescription drug abuse, particularly opioid abuse. A House bill (HF 1652) that would enhance the state’s Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) has passed through several committees.
Under the proposed legislation, the PMP would be allowed to use its database to substantiate investigations of prescribers accused of criminal activities or impairment as a result of abuse of a controlled substance. The bill further allows PMP staff access to the database during an investigation of a prescriber accused of inappropriately prescribing controlled substances. The House bill has been amended to include mandatory registration of all prescribers.
Importantly, the bill does not require consultation of the PMP before a prescription can be written, a step some legislators have sought. The MMA and other physician groups have raised concerns about the administrative burden such a mandate would have on physicians and other prescribers.

Push to re-instate provider tax dies
The MMA testified in opposition to a bill that would re-instate the 2 percent provider (sick) tax in mid-March. Ultimately, efforts failed and the tax is still set for repeal on December 31, 2019.
Dave Renner, the MMA’s director of state and federal legislation, argued that:
• The tax is regressive, selective and falls most heavily on the sick
• The tax was repealed in 2011 with bipartisan support because there was less need for the Health Care Access Fund (HCAF), which gets its revenue from the tax, with the passage of the ACA
• Both the General Fund and HCAF have surpluses
• The tax would add more than $720 million to the overall cost of health care in 2021, if it continues past its current 2019 sunset date.
Opposition to the provider tax has been a top priority for the MMA.

Work group on reducing health care costs meets
A new MMA steering committee that will focus on health care affordability in Minnesota began meeting in late March. The group is calling its effort the MARCH (Minnesota Action to Reduce Costs in Healthcare) Campaign.
The group’s charge is to focus on administrative burden and inefficiencies; prescription drug costs; and low-value and unnecessary care.
The committee includes representatives from a range of specialties and group sizes and will meet approximately six to eight times in 2016. It is chaired by Macaran Baird, MD. Other members include: Katherine Clinch, MD; David Herman, MD; Kenneth Holmen, MD; Kourtney Kemp, MD; Phillip Kibort, MD; Thomas Kottke, MD; Lisa Mattson, MD; Robert Nesse, MD; George Schoephoerster, MD; Kevin Smith, MD; Mike Tedford, MD; Laamy Tiadjeri, MD; Robert Wieland, MD; Douglas Wood,
MD; and James Woodburn, MD, Janet Silversmith, MMA director of health policy, staffs the committee.

**Avera Marshall lawsuit enters next phase**

Attorneys representing three physicians who are suing the administration of Avera Marshall Regional Medical Center filed an opening brief in the Minnesota Court of Appeals in mid-February. The MMA and AMA Litigation Center are providing financial support for the physicians’ appeal.

Last October, the Lyon County District Court in Marshall, Minnesota, ruled that the medical center administration has the authority to amend the medical staff bylaws without approval from two-thirds of the medical staff. The three physician plaintiffs, as well as others, dispute this.

The ruling came 10 months after the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled in favor of the medical staff in its case against the administration. The Court said that the staff is a legal entity that may bring suit on behalf of its member physicians, and that bylaws agreed to by a hospital and its medical staff constitute a contract to which both parties must adhere. However, the Court did not decide on whether the hospital’s administration could unilaterally change the medical staff bylaws. It remanded this issue to the District Court.

Following the District Court’s ruling, the physician plaintiffs decided to continue fighting the hospital administration.

**MMA meets with Congress members to discuss health care**

Two MMA members and two staffers met with members of Minnesota’s Congressional delegation in late February in Washington, DC, to discuss the new MACRA regulations, among other topics.


Along with MACRA, the group discussed:
- reducing administrative work related to “meaningful use” requirements for EHRs
- efforts to combat the opioid abuse crisis by educating prescribers on appropriate use of narcotics and increasing the commitment to treat drug addiction
- the MMA’s new MARCH campaign, which is targeting health care costs.

The MMA group was in the nation’s capital to attend the AMA’s National Advocacy Conference.

**Rapping MD and best-selling author signed for Annual Conference**

The MMA has signed a rapping MD from Las Vegas and a best-selling psychiatrist to headline its 2016 Annual Conference. Zubin Damania, MD, (aka ZDoggMD) and Damon Tweedy, MD, will keynote the event on September 23-24 at the Doubletree Park Place in St. Louis Park.

Damania, who produces award-winning medical rap videos that educate and entertain, will discuss physician burnout and resiliency and perform one of his songs. The former Stanford hospitalist has spoken at a variety of medical association events including those held by the Wisconsin Medical Society, Texas Medical Association and the American Medical Student Association.

Damania will discuss:
- the root causes of dysfunction in the U.S. health care system
- the causes, signs and symptoms of provider burnout

**On the calendar**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physician Social – Twin Cities</td>
<td>May 25</td>
<td>Surly Brewery, Minneapolis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Payment Reform Forum with Harold Miller</td>
<td>June 1</td>
<td>University of Minnesota’s Continuing Education and Conference Center, St. Paul Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician Social – Rochester</td>
<td>June 8</td>
<td>Cambria Showroom, Rochester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 Annual Conference</td>
<td>Sept. 23-24</td>
<td>DoubleTree by Hilton, St. Louis Park</td>
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Check the MMA’s website (www.mnmed.org/events) for more information and to register.
• how to communicate with patients through social media
• new models of health care delivery and financing.

Tweedy is author of the New York Times bestseller Black Man in a White Coat, which was selected by Time magazine as one of its Top 10 nonfiction books of 2015. Tweedy has written and lectured on the intersection of race and medicine, publishing articles in the New York Times, Washington Post and Chicago Tribune, in addition to JAMA and the Annals of Internal Medicine.

Tweedy will discuss health care disparities in his talk, "Is there a black doctor in the house?"

Tweedy is a graduate of Duke University School of Medicine. He completed both his medical internship and psychiatry residency at Duke Hospital. He is currently an assistant professor of psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center and a staff psychiatrist at the Durham VA Medical Center.

MMA begins leadership nomination process
The process for nominating physicians for 2016-17 MMA leadership positions is underway. Leaders will be elected during the MMA’s second member-wide electronic election this fall. Nominations from members and component medical societies will be accepted through May 20.

The available offices include: president-elect, three MMA trustee positions, two AMA delegate positions and three AMA alternate delegate positions. One of the three MMA trustee positions must be filled by a member of the Northwest Trustee district, while the remaining two positions will be elected from the at-large membership.

The nominating committee will meet in early June 2016 and later in July to recommend a slate of candidates for each position. Ballots will be electronically distributed on August 12 to all members who have provided the MMA with an email address. The election will be open for 30 days. Results will be announced no later than September 23, the start of the MMA Annual Conference. If you are interested in submitting a nomination or have questions contact George Lohmer at glohmer@mnmed.org or 612-362-3746.

National expert to address payment reform
The MMA will host a payment reform discussion with Harold Miller June 1 from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul campus. Miller, president and CEO of the Center for Healthcare Quality and Payment Reform, works at the local, state and national levels on initiatives to improve the quality of health care services and change the fundamental structure of health care payment systems in order to make it more value-based. Miller is also an adjunct professor of Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon University.

Social events set for physicians, residents, students
The MMA will hold free networking events in Minneapolis and Rochester for physicians and physicians-in-training this spring. The metro social will take place May 25 from 5 to 8 p.m. at Surly Brewery, 520 Malcolm Avenue SE in Minneapolis. The Rochester event will take place June 8 from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Cambria Gallery, 400 South Broadway in Rochester. The events are a celebration of medicine, a thank you to members, and a welcome to new and prospective members. Hors d’oeuvres and drinks will be served.

MMA asks court to rule on contract
On March 30, 2016, attorneys representing the MMA filed an action seeking declaratory judgment in Hennepin County District Court requesting that MMIC, the Edina-based medical liability insurance company, honor the contract the two parties agreed to in 2011. On March 16, 2016, the MMA received a letter from MMIC’s legal counsel informing the association that MMIC would no longer pay the agreed-to royalty. Minnesota physicians and the MMA created MMIC in 1980 and have had a long-term relationship to improve the medical liability environment in the state.

MMA debuts new website
The MMA has launched its new website (www.mnmed.org). It features a revamped home page with links to the most popular pages on the site, plus easier access to the award-winning magazine, Minnesota Medicine. The home page also has a new polling feature and a live Twitter feed. We hope you find the site easier to navigate.