



Ohio Association of Rheumatology Legislative Newsletter May 2016

State Updates

Lawmaker's Prepare for Summer Break

Advocates have been scrambling to engage Ohio legislators as the General Assembly prepares to adjourn for summer break. The OAR has actively advocated in support of several key issues this session that have garnered numerous sponsorships from House and Senate legislators.

Members of the OAR gathered in Columbus back in April to educate lawmakers on their legislative initiatives. The group focused on step therapy, prior authorization and biological products.

Since the meeting, some of the initiatives have been favorably funneled through the legislative process, while other bills have sat stagnant in committee.

OAR Priority Bill Update:

- Step Therapy (SB243/HB443): Both in committee.
- Prior Authorization (SB129): In committee.
- Biological Products (HB505): Passed out of the House 96-0 and in the Senate.

The OAR and a collection of stakeholders in Ohio will be gathering in the coming weeks to discuss targeting plans for key legislators. Speculation about when the General Assembly will reconvene has been limited, but sources believe legislators will not be back in action until after the November election.

The break in action will provide the OAR and advocate partners with an opportunity to evaluate current efforts and make adjustments where necessary. Until then, the OAR will continue to provide advocacy opportunities and updates throughout the summer.

For a complete recap on the advocacy day and legislative priorities, please visit the [advocacy section of the OAR website](#).

Federal Update

Part B Stakeholders Testify before Congress

Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations (CSRO) testified before the Subcommittee on Health in opposition to the recent Medicare Part B Demo proposed by CMS.

The hearing, "The Obama Administration's Medicare Drug Experiment: The Patient and Doctor Perspective," brought together stakeholders that would be adversely effected by the change in reimbursement for Part B drugs.

Bipartisan Step Therapy Letter Delivered to CMS

Congressman Leonard Lance (R-NJ) and Scott Peters (D-CA) have asked CMS to ensure step therapy protocols are open and transparent, do not create a barrier to access and do not take prescribing power out of the hands of physicians.

Advocacy Tips: Preparing to Engage an Elected Official

As the OAR provides opportunities for advocacy, it is important that the individual advocate prepare for future engagement with policymakers. To help, the OAR government relations team has provided some helpful advocacy tips to consider:

- DO YOUR HOMEWORK! Know exactly what you want to say and carefully review your messages.
- If possible, compile information about the impact of specific healthcare issues on the elected officials district or state.
- DO NOT compile a long list of statistics: your elected officials will not remember them and they will lose their impact.
- Prepare a few dramatic numbers or anecdotes to illustrate your points.
- To encourage policymakers to support a specific issue effecting rheumatology, present materials that clearly articulate your position. This type of material is readily available through the OAR website.
- Know the counter-arguments and be ready to respectfully answer any questions or disagreements.

Advocacy Opportunity

Members of the International Society for Clinical Densitometry (ICSD) will be meeting with members of congress to discuss restoring more adequate reimbursement for DXA. Please help in this effort by emailing your Congressman and urge their co-sponsorship of the Increasing Access to Osteoporosis Testing for Medicare Beneficiaries Act of 2015.

Take action by visiting [The International Society for Clinical Densitometry](#).

As always, OAR legislative staff will continue to monitor all relevant legislation and will update OAR membership as required.

Thursday, April 21, 2016 Arthritis Access & Advocacy Day

Another year of successful advocacy was achieved during the Third Annual Advocacy and Access Day. Presented by Ohio Rheumatology Association in conjunction with the Arthritis Foundation at Columbus State House on Thursday, April 21, 2016.

The joint program started with legislative meeting training presentations and concluded with advocate hill visits with over 65 physician and patient advocates.

Senator Shannon Jones, gave an update on the step therapy bill. Rep. Steve Huffman, who is also a physician, joined by his co- primary sponsor, Rep. Dorothy Pelanda, shared that the biologics bill was well received during a sponsor/proponent hearing and predicted the bill would move quickly through the House, which means there is a possibility of passage this session.

OAR's own advocates joined in sharing their stories and concerns for the day; Dr. Elisabeth Rotor shared stories of her patients who suffered because they could not be treated in a timely manner. This was due to the extended wait time and appeals process with prior authorization.