

NEW PERSPECTIVES

Become a “60-second” Advocate!

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Feeling passionate about advocating for general internal medicine (GIM) but don't know how to start? Wondering how to get in touch with members of Congress to ask them to act on our behalf? Don't know what the issues are and how you can help? Feeling like you just don't have enough time in the day to take on one more project? SGIM can help you become a 60-second advocate!

SGIM's Health Policy Committee has long been dedicated to advocating for issues dear to GIM. Each year, members work to champion issues in education, research, and clinical practice like fair and equitable Medicare reimbursement policies, adequate funding for health professions training, and support for health services research. More than 50 members are active on four different subcommittees that meet on monthly subcommittee calls; work within ad hoc groups on specific initiatives; write articles, letters, and educational messages; and provide updates at SGIM regional and national meetings. And each year in March, SGIM members come to Capitol Hill en masse to put specific messages in front of their own representatives. The Committee is active and fun and provides a strong voice for SGIM in federal health policy.

So what can you do in 60 seconds that would help make a difference? The answer is—quite a bit. This year, SGIM has partnered with CongressWeb, a new software that allows SGIM members to petition

Congress on behalf of specific legislation. You may have already seen e-mails from the Health Policy Committee that inform members about specific health policy issues. To help members communicate directly with their representatives, additional e-mails are sent that allow members to send their representatives a tailored message on an issue in just a few clicks. This takes less than a minute and enables member voices to be heard on the Hill. This software also allows for members to deliver pre-formatted tweets to their representatives and share Facebook posts on SGIM's positions. Have another minute to spare? You can also send a pre-written letter to the editor for media outlets in your hometown alerting and educating others about an important policy issue.

In just 60 seconds of advocacy, you have actively participated in the democratic process. But what if you have a little more time? Visit the SGIM website's Advocacy 101 section (<http://www.sgim.org/communities/advocacy/advocacy-101>), and read through some topics to further your advocacy education. Briefs like “Getting Your Message Across in Congress” and “Understanding the Advocacy Process” will advance your learning. Once you have a better understanding of the process, there are links to key Congressional members and SGIM's specific advocacy positions. Our governmental relations firm, Cavarocchi-Ruscio-Dennis (CRD)

Associates, LLC, publishes a monthly report to let SGIM members know exactly what is going on in Congress throughout the year. These reports can also be found online at <http://www.sgim.org/communities/advocacy/advocacy-reports>. Also online is a compendium of legislative endorsements from SGIM, which allows members to see how SGIM has responded to a variety of issues in the past.

Still want to learn more? Each year both regional and annual meetings have a great deal of advocacy content. At the annual meeting last month in Toronto, workshops like “Face-to-Face Advocacy 101: Visiting Your Elected Officials” and “Armchair Advocacy: An Op-Ed Writing Workshop” were presented alongside the Health Policy Interest Group meeting as part of the health policy/advocacy/social justice track. A health policy update is provided at each regional meeting, and health policy articles are included on a regular basis in *Forum*. Members of the Outreach Subcommittee are developing a project that brings together health policy curricula (see article by Ted Long) as a way to join educators interested in teaching health policy and advocacy to students across the country. And of course, we encourage all SGIM members to participate in SGIM's Hill Day each March.

We urge you to participate to amplify SGIM's voice in health policy—for 60 seconds, 60 minutes, or 60 years!