

## Back to the Basics in a New Economy

By: Helen Combs, Administrator of Alabama Allergy & Asthma Center, President of Medical Group Management Association (MGMA)



Many of us have been here before. We are once again in a position where we have to do more with much less. In today's economic environment of increasing expenses and declining fee schedules it's all about being efficient and effective to keep your bottom line on the positive. As a practice manager for over 15 years I've seen most of the tricks and tried most of the options. Here I share some of the

best and most basic elements that have proven positive effects on the bottom line.

**Customer Service** – Spend good salary dollars on great telephone operators and receptionists. They are the gateway to your practice and set the tone for the patient's entire experience with your practice. Take the time to assess your receptionist's ability to deal with all situations, types of people and achieve a positive outcome. Whether it's answering the phone with a friendly voice on the first ring or greeting patients with a smile. It's not optional. Patients don't always remember the clinical care, but they do remember how they were treated as a person.

*Continued on Page 3*

## Exercise is Medicine™: A New Prescription for Health and Wellness

By: Sophia Lal, D.O., of Fagan Sports Medicine



What if there were one prescription that could prevent and treat dozens of diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity? Would you prescribe it to your patients?

Exercise is Medicine™ is an initiative co-founded by the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Medical Association, designed to help improve the health and well-being of our nation through a regular physical activity prescription from doctors and other health care providers.

As health system reform takes center stage in the United States, prevention has become a hot topic among lawmakers, media and the public. However, everyone can practice prevention in the form of healthy lifestyles, and it doesn't cost a dime. Better nutrition and higher levels of physical activity don't increase cost and they bring a huge payoff in

*Continued on Page 7*

## Special Thanks

The JCMS Executive Committee and Board of Directors would like to thank MedManagement LLC, ProAssurance Corporation, and Warren, Averett, Kimbrough and Marino LLC for their sponsorship of our Annual Dinner Meeting on November 3 and for their ongoing support of the Jefferson County Medical Society and its members.



Articles which are included in this publication are not peer-reviewed and the content of the articles is the sole responsibility of the author. The Jefferson County Medical Society does not assume responsibility for the accuracy or content of any articles published in Pulse.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Dec. 15** The Wayne Finley 811 Breakfast Club Meeting – Dr. Christopher L. Kelly will speak on “Ophthalmology in Jefferson County” at 8:30 a.m. in the JCMS Board Room
- Dec. 17** 2010 CPT/ICD-9 Changes Coding Classes – 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- Dec. 21** Foundation Trust Meeting – 5:00 p.m.  
Executive Committee Meeting – 5:30 p.m.
- Jan. 19** The Wayne Finley 811 Breakfast Club Meeting – Dr. Lyle Cain, Jr. will speak on “History of Sports Medicine” at 8:30 a.m. in the JCMS Board Room
- Jan. 25** Board of Directors Meeting  
Executive Committee Meeting
- Feb. 16** The Wayne Finley 811 Breakfast Club Meeting – Mrs. Anita Smith will speak at 8:30 a.m. in the JCMS Board Room
- Feb. 22** Executive Committee Meeting

Contact Juanita Pruitt at 933-8601 or [jpruitt@jcmsalabama.org](mailto:jpruitt@jcmsalabama.org) for more information regarding any of the above events.

## Ask Robin Long for your MEMBER DISCOUNT!!

The Jefferson County Medical Society has arranged for its members to receive special discounts for collection and billing services. By special agreement with Healthcare Financial Services, LLC (HFS), members will get outstanding collections results and services while paying low contingency fee rates...no results, no fees for JCMS members. Take advantage of your JCMS affiliation and call Robin Long at 601-420-1242 or 1-877-747-7072 (Client Services). Your benefits will be worth the call as HFS designs a special campaign for your specific needs. Be sure to mention your membership with JCMS to receive the discounted rate.

(See ad on page 7)

## *In Memoriam*

The JCMS wants to acknowledge the recent passing of the following JCMS members:

**Donald H. Slappey, Sr., M.D.**  
*September 26, 2009*

**Herbert H. Thomas, M.D.**  
*September 28, 2009*

**Leonard Calvert Bleidt, M.D.**  
*October 14, 2009*

**Claude C. Blackwell, M.D.**  
*November 4, 2009*

**Peter W. Morris, M.D.**  
*November 12, 2009*

Continued from Page 1

**Appointment Reminders** – a basic strategy that will never go out of style. Consider calling your patients to remind them of their appointment two days in advance. This way if they cancel you have at least a full business day to fill the open appointment.

**Patient Financial Responsibilities** – I can't stress time of service (TOS) payments enough. The easiest and least expensive money to collect is when the patient is standing in your office. Make sure you accept ALL forms of payments and make sure you are reminding patients to bring their copays and deductibles when appointments are being confirmed. Another great idea is to send your statements bi-weekly or even weekly. Patients are more apt to pay bills when they are receiving constant reminders. Also, don't be afraid to send letters to patients with balances over 30 days old. The longer you take to press a patient for payment the more apt you are to never collect the payment. We have a bonus structure in place in my office for our staff that incentivizes them to collect TOS payments.

**Marketing** – Make sure potential patients and other physicians know you are there and providing care for patients. I can't tell you how many times I run into patients who tell me they had no idea there was a doctor that treats \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with your specialty). They won't know about you unless you get them to notice you. Here are some ideas: advertise in publications that meet your target market, schedule a lunch meeting with a physician who is a potential referral source, enlist the help of a medical practice marketing company, participate in corporate and community health fairs. Whatever your effort, it needs to be consistent and clear to be effective. To be effective in marketing you should be spending 3-5% of the annual revenue of your practice.

There are many more strategies you can incorporate into your practices to help gain efficiency. For more information on programs that help your specialty gain efficiency log on to your college or academy websites for your specialty, [www.pmeccomm.com](http://www.pmeccomm.com), or email me questions at [hcombs@alabamaallergy.com](mailto:hcombs@alabamaallergy.com).

*Helen Combs is the Administrator of Alabama Allergy & Asthma Center with locations in Homewood, Hoover and The Narrows . Ms. Combs graduated from Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY. She is the current President of Medical Group Management Association of Birmingham.*

## New Members

- Ashley Wolchina Allison, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Pathology
- Sean Christian Allison, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Ophthalmology
- Khaleel Kamal Ashraf, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Hematology
- Brent Norris Barranco, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Gastroenterology
- Allison Michelle Bridges, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Gastroenterology
- Jonathan Mark Bridges, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Hematology
- David Ethan Cox, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Internal Medicine
- Ms. Samantha R. Eschborn \_\_\_\_\_ Student
- Grant E. Eudy, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Pathology
- Donna Baxley Fico, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Internal Medicine
- Philip John Fischer II, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Surgery
- Timothy Alder Frye, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Radiology
- Mr. Tyler R. Green \_\_\_\_\_ Student
- Amita Ramesh Hazariwala, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Internal Medicine
- F. Spain Hodges, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Orthopedic Surgery
- Dorothy Elizabeth Hughes, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Family Medicine
- Ms. Jennifer L. Kirkman \_\_\_\_\_ Student
- Tamara Ann Mason, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Pediatrics
- Sheharyar Khan Merwat, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Internal Medicine
- James J. Murphy, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Orthopedics
- Mr. Edwin E. Mwakalindile \_\_\_\_\_ Student
- Brendon M. Prendergast, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Radiation Oncology Resident
- Agata M. Przekwas, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Nephrology
- Weston Herbert Rothrock, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Pathology
- Robert A Shaffer, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Gastroenterology
- Ms. Elizabeth M. Staley \_\_\_\_\_ Student
- Ms. Carla C. Stefanescu \_\_\_\_\_ Student
- Ms. Katisha T. Vance, M.D. \_\_\_\_\_ Hematology & Oncology



# Jefferson County Medical Society Annual Dinner Meeting



# HOW CAN WE HELP??

Each month we receive calls relating to a wide variety of topics relating to the practice of medicine. This month we decided we would print some of the information responsive to those inquiries.

## CME requirements

On July 15, 2009, the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners voted to increase the continuing medical education requirement for physicians and physician assistants to 25 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ (or equivalent) annually, effective January 1, 2010. If you earn credits in excess of the 12 credit requirement for 2009, you may carry those hours over, or add them to the hours earned in 2010, to meet the new 25 credit requirement. After that, there will be no "rollover" provision; consequently, beginning in 2011, all 25 required credits must be earned in each calendar year, and excess credits may not be applied to the next year. Examples of rollover hours and a worksheet can be found on the BME website at: <http://www.albme.org/Default.aspx?Page=CMEex>.

Retired physicians who choose to keep their license must meet the 25 hours CME requirement. The only exception is a physician who is fully retired who requests a waiver of the CME requirements by submitting the required form to the BME. As part of that process, the physician must certify that she/he does "not engage in the practice of medicine in any form, including the treatment of family members and the prescribing, to anyone, of controlled and/or legend drugs." The physician must also voluntarily surrender her or his Alabama Controlled Substances Registration Certificate along with the request for CME Exemption. A copy of the CME Exemption request form is available at:

<http://www.albme.org/Default.aspx?Page=Forms>.

## License Renewal Postcards

Several physicians have called to express concern about their license renewal reminders being sent on open postcards, particularly since the information on the cards includes license numbers, login instructions and passwords that could be used by others without the physician's authorization. We have expressed this concern to the BME.

**The Valletta Group**  
THE PHYSICIAN BILLING COMPANY

*Symptoms. Inconsistent collections. Increasing A/R.*  
*Diagnosis. Billings and collections failure.*  
*Plan of Care. The Valletta Group.*

Physician-owned and operated, we understand the impact of billing and collections on your practice's financial health.

Our **all-inclusive** model of physician billing maximizes revenue.

- Daily Charge Entry, Claim Submission, Payment Posting and Insurance Follow Up
- Credentialing *all* clinicians with *all* payors
- Comprehensive A/R Management, including patient statements and billing questions
- Client-customized Performance Reports

*Prognosis. 15% increase in revenue in 3 months.\**

Whatever the size, specialty or practice setting, we can meet your physician billing needs.

Contact us today for a **free** collections analysis.  
1.888.874.7084 or 205.874.8300  
[sales@thevallettagroup.com](mailto:sales@thevallettagroup.com)

\* Clients of The Valletta Group average a 15% increase in revenue in as few as 3 months.

## The Civitan International Research Center at UAB is currently seeking a Pediatrician

The Civitan International Research Center at UAB is currently seeking a Pediatrician to work two days a week in the Civitan-Sparks Clinics evaluating children, from birth to 18 years, with special health care needs in multiple interdisciplinary clinics effective immediately. This is an irregular faculty position at UAB with no benefits. The minimum qualifications are: (1) M.D., Pediatrician, Board Certified; (2) 3 or more years post residency with training and clinical experience in developmental disorders and genetics. Key functions performed: (1) Provide developmental evaluations, according to AAP guidelines, for children with various developmental disorders; (2) Review charts and communications from other specialists; (3) Help supervise medical residents and other trainees. All interested applicants should send current curriculum vitae and three letters of reference electronically as a single PDF to: [llarue@uab.edu](mailto:llarue@uab.edu) Lissa LaRue 934-9605. Please visit the Civitan-Sparks Clinics at: <http://www.circ.uab.edu/>.

"UAB is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer"

# In The News



**Daniel E. Rousso, M.D.** will serve as the new President of the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS). He specializes in Facial Plastic Surgery and has been in practice for over twenty years. Dr. Rousso is internationally renowned for his contributions to the field of facial plastic surgery. As president, he will represent over 2,700 facial plastic and reconstructive surgeons throughout the United States - whose cosmetic reconstructive surgery focuses on the face, head and neck.

Dr. Rousso is an active member of the AAFPRS Face-to-Face Program – an organization that provides complementary care to individuals who suffer facial deformities due to circumstances beyond their control such as deformities at birth, domestic violence, and war.

## Notice to OB/GYN providers

The Jefferson County Department of Health would like to assist you in registering to order 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine for your patients. Guidance about testing, treating and vaccinating pregnant patients was sent to you by FACOG and the Alabama Department of Public Health. Here are step-by-step instructions to register to order your vaccine.

- 1) Access [www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)
- 2) At the top of the page, click on "Log In"
- 3) In the middle of this page, click on "ORDER"
- 4) Enter the physician's name and Alabama Medical License number

When the vaccine becomes available, you will be notified by ADPH to place your order using the same mechanism. Orders should be placed in 100 dose increments. You can access patient education materials, FAQs, vaccine safety information and dosage instructions at [www.cdc.gov/H1N1](http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1)

**Lose or break your pager?  
We will replace it that day!!**

Alpha and numeric replacement pagers are available 24/7.

We are here when you need us-

Call Mary Whitehead at  
(205)933-8601

**Continued from Page 1**

terms of lower health-care costs, increased productivity and greater quality of life. Increased activity, healthier eating, and incorporating movement into everyday life are the main keys to health, longevity and disease prevention. It was recently reported that treating obesity was responsible for the biggest jump in health care spending in recent years; obese populations accounted for \$303.1 billion in health care costs in 2006, nearly doubling the \$166.7 billion spent on these individuals in 2001.

In a very real sense, exercise is medicine. Studies repeatedly show that physical activity and exercise can help prevent obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other chronic conditions. According to research published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, low cardio-respiratory fitness, or physical inactivity, has a greater effect on the rate of mortality than other major factors such as smoking, hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol. A study published in The Journal of the American Medical Association found a low level of fitness is a bigger risk factor for mortality than mild-moderate obesity. But leading a healthier lifestyle needn't mean hitting the treadmill every night or becoming fanatical about exercise.



Walking for 30 minutes each night after dinner or during a lunch hour has powerful preventive effects and requires just a pair of comfortable walking shoes. Just thirty minutes of physical activity per day can:

- reduce mortality and the risk of recurrent breast cancer by almost 50%;
- lower the risk of colon cancer by more than 60%;
- reduce the risk of developing of Alzheimer's disease by one-third; and
- decrease depression as effectively as a prescription drug or behavioral therapy.

Physicians and other health care providers should encourage patients to become physically active. A public survey conducted in 2007 by the American College of Sports Medicine [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org) found that nearly two-thirds of patients (65 percent) would be more interested in exercising to stay healthy if advised by their doctor and given additional resources. Take action today. Visit the Exercise is Medicine Web site [www.exerciseismedicine.org](http://www.exerciseismedicine.org) for additional information. You will find a more detailed description of the initiative, ways you can counsel patients on their exercise regimens and information on how physical activity can be an integral part of any patient's health care program.

If you are interested in speaking with the Exercise Is Medicine representative for Alabama, please feel free to contact Sophia Lal, DO, at Fagan Sports Medicine, [slal@uab.edu](mailto:slal@uab.edu).

Truly, exercise is medicine—a prescription for better health.



**Let us be your Business Partner!**

Quality collection services customized to specific client needs.

- For "fee" collections • Pre-collects
- No collections • No fees
- Accounts Receivable Specialists
- Consulting Services • Training • Seminars



643 Lakeland East Dr. • Jackson, MS 39232

**Robin Long • (601) 420-1242**

Fax (601) 933-2530



**“Why is this the best fit for my practice?”**

**They see things through my eyes.”**

ProAssurance understands your desire for more control, less uncertainty, and preservation of your hard-earned professional identity.

It’s about fair treatment. You want reasonable rates with stable premiums, prompt service, easy access to valuable risk reduction information, and of course, unfettered defense of your good medicine.

The qualities you value most in a protection partner are easily within reach.

**Just take a look.**



**Professional Liability Insurance & Risk Management Services**

ProAssurance Group is rated **A (Excellent)** by A.M. Best.  
[www.ProAssurance.com](http://www.ProAssurance.com) • 800.282.6242

*The Reveal Logo and TREATED FAIRLY are trademarks of ProAssurance Corporation.*

**Jefferson  
County  
Medical  
Society**

901 South 18th Street  
Birmingham, Alabama 35205