



## The Foundation of Emergency Medicine is Being Undermined



*WACEP President's Message, August 2020*  
*Ryan Thompson, MD, FACEP*

I recently started work on an addition for my house, and after digging a giant hole, my contractor discovered that the sandy dirt under my foundation had largely eroded away in the 90 years since the house had been built. This was an unwelcome (and expensive!) discovery, but even more concerning is that I suddenly had to worry about my house collapsing – a possibility I had never even considered in my 5 years of living there. How could something as seemingly small as sand have such a major impact on the stability of my home?!

Just like the sand under my home, Medicare reimbursement is probably something most emergency physicians rarely think about. However, since we see such a large number of Medicare patients, those payments do serve as the foundation for the financial solvency of many of our practices. And also like that sand, those payments are at threat of bringing down the whole house if they erode away.

ACEP had actually made great headway on increasing CMS payments for emergency E/M codes in this year's CMS reimbursement fee schedule update. They were able to secure an increase of about 12.7% for level 3 charts, and an increase of about 5.25% for level 4 and 5 charts. This is good news! However, as always, the devil is in the details. In order to promote primary care, CMS increased payments for all outpatient office codes. However, CMS has a mandate to remain budget neutral, so they have proposed a rule slashing all other physician reimbursements by 9%. Factoring in the increase in ED codes, emergency physicians are facing a 6% decrease in reimbursement in 2021, taking a veritable firehose to the sand that supports many small practice groups.

However, we don't have to stand idly by and watch this happen. If Congress waives the budget neutrality requirement,

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we will actually see an increase of about 3%. And in the midst of facing down a pandemic, now is not the time to start shortchanging the nation's physicians. [Reach out to your legislators](#) and let them know that emergency physicians need relief right now, not belt tightening. A cut of this scale could force smaller groups out of business all around the nation, and Wisconsin has a high percentage of small independent groups.

If Congress fails to stop this erosion of the foundations of Emergency Medicine, the long-term damage will be far more expensive and difficult to fix than is apparent at first glance. Just ask my contractor!

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### Feedback Sought on Epistaxis Management

Andrew Culp, a community ED physician based in Madison, is gathering physician feedback on epistaxis management for an upcoming Phase I NIH SBIR (Small Business Innovation Research) grant. Please consider taking [this 3-minute survey](#) to share your perspective.

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### Now Available - On Demand

#### LLSA CME Workshop (2019 Articles)

Presenters Michael Walters, MD and Ben Ho, MD lead an informative review of the 2019 LLSA articles to help emergency physicians prepare for the LLSA component of ABEM's Continuous Certification process. This course is complimentary for ACEP members and offers 2 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits*<sup>SM</sup>. Upon registering, you will receive the video link and also a link to complete a brief post-test and program evaluation where you can claim CME. [Register here](#).

#### State Legislative Updates, Federal COVID Updates and the Scoop on AUCM

ACEP staff leaders Jeffrey Davis and Harry Monroe join WACEP's legislative chair Lisa Maurer, MD, FACEP for an overview of legislative updates important to emergency physician in Wisconsin. [View Recording](#).

#### DHS Telehealth Webinar Recordings

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) hosted all-inclusive webinars last week to engage providers, provider associations, members, and member advocates in telehealth expansion. These webinars provided an overview of the telehealth expansion project and gathered input on permanent telehealth policy. View Provider webinar [here](#), and visit the DHS [webpage](#) for additional resources on telehealth expansion.

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**Marshfield Clinic  
Health System**



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#### Career Center



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American College of  
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563 Carter Ct Suite B  
Kimberly WI 54136

920-750-7725  
920-882-3655 (fax)

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## Upcoming Events

### **WACEP Annual Membership Meeting, September 15 (new date!)**

Join WACEP leaders for the annual report / state-of-the-state of the organization. Hear updates on membership, finances, education, advocacy efforts and more, and congratulate this year's award recipients.

Tuesday, September 15, 2020, 12:15 pm CDT

[Join Meeting Here](#)

Meeting ID: 925 746 012

Password: 783355

### **Anthony S. Fauci, MD, NIAID Director to Keynote ACEP20 on October 26**

Hear from the man who has been at the epicenter of this pandemic and get a first-hand account of the nation's response to COVID-19. Dr. Anthony Fauci will offer his unique perspective on the virus and the care given to Americans in 2020. He will kick off ACEP20 at 9 am CDT, Oct. 26, followed by a panel of international emergency physicians on "Lessons Learned: Global Response to COVID-19." [Learn more/register.](#)

### **WACEP 2021 Spring Symposium & Wisconsin's Annual Emergency Medicine Research Forum, April 7-8, 2021**

Save-the-Date and plan to join WACEP for its 2021 conference, April 7-8, 2021 at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Milwaukee.

### **Doctor Day is May 5, 2021**

Wisconsin's Doctor Day brings together physicians from every specialty and practice environment to meet with their legislators and advocate on health care issues affecting healthcare. The multi-specialty nature of Doctor Day makes it among the most unique advocacy events for physicians in the country. Whether you're a seasoned veteran or brand new to the legislative process, attending Doctor Day will provide you advocacy tools and skills to make your voices heard. [Sign up today](#) and join your emergency medicine colleagues from all across Wisconsin at the Capitol on May 5.

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