



Orthopaedic Advocacy Primer American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons Young Arthroplasty Group

The current U.S. healthcare system continues to change and evolve. We as surgeons are constantly being judged, now more than ever, on how we deliver healthcare. Cost and quality are at the forefront of healthcare policy. It is absolutely critical that we, as orthopaedic surgeons, engage in the process, voice our positions and actively advocate to effect positive change for both our patients and our profession.

Advocacy provides a necessary venue to get involved, at the local, state or federal level. It affords us the opportunity to leverage our knowledge, expertise and influence to advance the delivery of orthopaedic care not just to our patients, but to our local communities and the population. As young arthroplasty surgeons, we are in an inherently different position relative to our more senior colleagues. We are trying to build our practice and grow our reputations. Advocacy is a perfect tool to do just that.

The shift from traditional fee-for-service to value-based practice impacts every physician. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) focus on delivering high-value care under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA). Currently there are both voluntary and mandatory programs such as the Comprehensive Care for Joint Replacement model (CJR), Bundled Payments for Care Improvement Advanced (BPCI Advanced) and other Advanced Alternative Payment Models (APMs). All of these programs have pros and cons but if you're reading this and don't know what those are, or how they affect you and your practice, you are not alone! What are all these acronyms anyway? Many surgeons continue to struggle to understand how these models work and what's required when and if you need to implement them. Should you participate in a voluntary bundle program? What are the risks and benefits? If you don't, how will that effect your patient volume compared to others that may be participating? Part of advocacy involves better understanding these programs so that you can effectively participate and maximize your potential for success.

Additionally, the better you understand these new initiatives, the more insight you can glean into the shifting economics and the better equipped you will be to weigh in on the discussions. There are countless examples of how passively approaching these changes has led to a decrease in compensation, increase in administrative burden and overall decrease in job satisfaction. Being at the table gives us a voice and the more people we have involved the louder that voice will resonate. Tort reform, combating the opioid abuse crisis, defining quality metrics specific and relevant to orthopaedics, and prescription drug pricing are just a few additional examples of issues we are constantly facing. Policy decisions to address these issues impact us and we need to be involved in those discussions so that the end result is in line with our goals.

Advocacy provides an avenue to get involved with your local and state government, orthopaedic societies and colleagues. Competition continues to grow in orthopaedics and in all communities, large or small. Involvement can enhance your reputation and increase your market reach and solidify your position. Speaking your opinion about issues and proposed legislation that directly impacts you and your patients is part of advancing our professional goals. Who better to promote effective policy than us, the surgeons providing care. Involvement allows us to respond to the specific needs within our

respective communities. It allows us to frame the arguments based on the factors unique to our individual experiences and gives us the opportunity to see how others are addressing critical issues.

We encourage and welcome your involvement!

Please respond if you are interested in advocacy or would like to learn more about specific ways in which you can get involved.

One easy way to advocate for the profession is through the Orthopaedic Political Action Committee (OrthoPAC). This vital advocacy resource, run by the American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons, acts as the orthopaedic political action voice on Capitol Hill. Contributing to this PAC has many benefits and, as a group of young surgeons, we have an opportunity make a difference now and far into the future. We encourage our group members to consider a contribution. Signing up is easy, and every contribution counts! [Click here](#) for more information, or text the word AAHKS to 41444 to give now. Any amount of contribution helps!

The PAC has also developed a [Resident Toolkit](#), which provides input on issues, benefits of giving to the PAC, presentations that can be used to recruit your fellow residents, and information on the Future's Capitol Club for Residents, which provides the benefits of the Capitol Club at a discounted rate. As the PAC states, "Every orthopaedist has an important role in our advocacy efforts regardless of whether you are at the beginning or end of your career. Residents offer fresh new perspectives on the challenges we face and your involvement sets a strong precedent for those around you. Simply put, we need each and every current and future member of AAOS to belong to the PAC and our ability to achieve our advocacy goals will be unparalleled!"

AAHKS is a member of the PAC's Advisor Circle at the highest level, [learn more](#).

For those of you who are already active in advocacy at any level, we would love to hear what you are doing, how you believe this has benefited you and any advice or suggestions you have for others to get involved. Please email aahksstaff@aahks.org with your input and stories.