House adopts policies on reimbursement, PSROs, competency, specialization

The APhA House of Delegates has voted overwhelmingly to adopt the recommendations of the Association's policy committees on reimbursement in federal health care programs, continuing education and competency, PSROs and specialization.

In other action at the Annual Meeting in San Francisco, the House literally shot down a motion to censure APhA Executive Director Dr. William S. Apple and the Board of Trustees. The recommendation of the policy committee on public affairs voted by the House urged that the pharmacist's professional fees in federally supported health care programs be "promptly and equitably readjusted" and that federal regulations governing fees be reviewed and adjusted on a "regularized, periodic basis."

Earlier in the Annual Meeting, the House had voted to approve the Board of Trustees' actions on their behalf since the last Meeting in Chicago. The House's vote included approval of the Association's formal response to the MAC proposals (see APhA Weekly, Feb. 15) and APhA testimony before Congress. Almost 300 accredited delegates heard Dr. Apple reiterate that nothing in the Association's position on MAC contradicts a fundamental APhA policy: that the pharmacist must be able to recover 100% of his actual cost plus an equitable fee for his professional services.

Later in the Meeting (April 23), general session participants heard HEW Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger disclose that his agency "intends to work with state Medicaid programs to see that dispensing fees are set at reasonable and equitable levels."

The HEW Secretary also announced that HEW will soon begin a special study of drug service claim forms.

"Its primary purpose will be to help us design a single, uniform claim form that will be as simple and as brief as we can make it," said Weinberger in announcing the study.

House members also adopted the policy committee report on organizational affairs, which enumerated the criteria for the recognition of specialties in pharmacy (see APhA Weekly, Nov. 16, 1974). Six pharmacist members have already been appointed to the Board of Pharmaceutical Specialties created by the Board of Trustees, while APhA staff currently is in the process of developing a budget and bylaws for the Specialties Board. In voting on the organizational affairs report, the House rejected an ASHP effort to include managerial and administrative functions as two of the bases on which to recognize a specialty.

With respect to the policy committee report on professional affairs, the House voted to urge pharmacist participation in Professional Standards Review Organizations. The House then agreed to a committee recommendation that APhA support a voluntary system to measure continuing competence, as well as programs designed to establish standards of competence. Earlier, the House accepted recommendations from the policy committee on public affairs that APhA support membership for pharmacists on PSROs and that APhA urge revision of the National Drug Code.

In the most significant matter of new business before the House, an attempt by APhA member Charles E. Sharek of Massachusetts to censure Dr. Apple and APhA Trustees garnered virtually no support on the House floor and was shot down when put to a vote by Speaker David J. Krigstein.

Appel, Miller nominated for Association presidency; Speaker Krigstein re-elected

APhA Chairman of the Board of Trustees William F. Appel of Minnesota and former Speaker of the House Jacob W. Miller of Kansas have been nominated as candidates for the office of 1976-77 president of the Association.

The nominations of Appel and Miller were made during the Annual Meeting in San Francisco.

Thomas H. Holland of Virginia and Stanley V. Susina of Alabama were nominated for the APhA vice presidency. Holland is a former president of the APhA Academy of General Practice of Pharmacy, while Susina is a leader in Alabama and has served APhA in many capacities.

Nominated for the Board of Trustees were Louis P. Jeffrey of Rhode Island, 1974-75 vice speaker of the House; Mary L. Munson, 1974-75 president-elect of the California Pharmaceutical Association; Rinaldo A. Brusadin, 1975 president-elect of the Ohio State Pharmaceutical Association; Gill T. Hartliep, a recent president of the Iowa Pharmaceutical Association; Robert K. Chalmers of Indiana, AACP's 1975 chairman-elect of the Council of Sections; and Kenneth F. Finger, dean of the College of Pharmacy at the University of Florida.

Nominated for the APhA Judicial Board were Victor R. Boisseree of California, manager of health plans operations for the state department of health; August P. Lemberger, dean of the College of Pharmacy at the University of Illinois Medical Center; Calvin C. Woods, former president of the Iowa Pharmaceutical Association; and Lonnie J. Yarbrough, vice president of the Texas Pharmaceutical Association.

In their own elections conducted on the floor of the House, Delegates re-elected speaker David J. Krigstein of Delaware and named Mark J. Sullivan of Florida as vice-speaker.
Weikel supports APHAnot bear an unreasonable share of theburden of controlling drug expenses."

Still on the subject of costs, Weikel said the drug industry is responsible for
the inability of federal and state agencies to pin down prices and costs. As
all practicing pharmacists are aware, Weikel said average wholesale prices published in the Red Book and Blue Book do not represent the real terms on
which drugs are sold.

"The time has come for the drug indus-
try to stop playing around," Weikel
said. "The time has come for them to
state a true price for a drug for all their
customers. We offer to make a deal with
them. They should use the occasion of
actual acquisition cost to provide us with
hard price information and develop real-
istic, scientific pricing and marketing
systems."

In a message intended for drug in-
dustry representatives, Weikel said that
MAC will encourage rather than discou-
rage free enterprise.

"All of these charges are simply
false," said Weikel. "They have been
anticipated quite sufficiently by the MAC
proposals themselves. Those who per-
sist in making them are indulging in scare tactics that have no basis in fact."

APS-APHA mutual efforts

Mutual efforts undertaken by APHAnot bear an unreasonable share of the

and its Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences have helped to bridge the gap between scientists and practicing pharmacists.

Speaking before the APHA House of Delegates on April 21, APS president Louis W. Busse of Wisconsin said the Academy's involvement in two joint proj-

ects with the Association demonstrates that the scientific community and the
general practitioner can work together.

The two joint projects—the reorga-
nization of the APHA Bioavailability Project Committee and the establishment of an

APHC Committee on the Compendia and

and Compendial Standards—were both ini-
tiated in 1974.

Busse reported that an Academy member now chairs the Bioavailability Project Committee, and that the APS executive committee will have input in the
drugs selected for monographs and will be able to comment on the mono-

graphs before final publication.

Busse also said APS's close cooperation with the Association in the prepara-
tion of the APHA response to HEW's proposed Maximum Allowable Cost reg-

ulations had enabled both the Academy and APHA to have "a better under-
standing of each other's concerns and position."

AGP reports heavy response
to safety packaging survey

A survey conducted by the APHA Academy of General Practice of Phar-

macy may result in policy recommenda-
tions designed to alleviate patient care
and compliance problems associated with


the use of child-resistant containers.

Speaking at the opening session of

the APHA House of Delegates, Academy president William J. Edwards of Texas

said both AGP and APHA have become increasingly concerned with reports from

members that in some instances child-

resistant packaging may have an ad-

verse effect on patient compliance.

Edwards reported that AGP has sur-
veyed 2,000 practicing pharmacists in

order to gauge the severity of the prob-

lem and added that the high rate of re-

sponses to the AGP questionnaire—

over 50%—indicates many practitioners share the AGP concern.

The AGP president emphasized that

both the Academy and APHA have al-

ways supported the principal objectives of the 1970 Poison Prevention Packag-

ing Act. Once the survey results are tabulated, however, Edwards said the

Academy will formulate specific recom-

mendations for alleviation of the prob-

lems associated with the Act. "I can

assure you they will be considered promptly by the APHA Board of

Trustees," Edwards said.
Johnson urges ‘straight talk’ to public on drug prices

Pharmacists need to take the initiative, outgoing APhA president Robert C. Johnson told the opening session of the APhA Annual Meeting, if they are going to persuade the public they aren’t responsible for wide price differentials in prescription drug products.

In making his final speech as APhA president, Johnson said that “patients aren’t interested in the price discrimination pharmacists suffer. With the soaring costs of health care, patients want to save every dollar they can. We can help them through drug product selection. We can help them by providing a full value of professional service for the fee we charge. But until we prevail upon the manufacturers and wholesalers to eliminate the pricing chaos they are causing, pharmacists will continue to be the scapegoats.”

Johnson urged an approach of candor and said that both the California Pharmaceutical Association and APhA have been able to persuade consumer activists that even if price discrimination could be eliminated, there would still be reasonable differences in prices because of differences in the professional services offered by different pharmacists.

“Most consumer leaders are pragmatists,” Johnson continued. “They know the public will lose more than just convenience if their neighborhood pharmacy is forced to close. They know that FTC policing efforts barely constrain deceptive price advertising practices. A large consumer group recently came out in opposition to a prescription advertising bill currently pending in the California legislature because they were convinced that ultimately the patient would pay more—not less—for prescriptions.”

The truth is the profession’s most persuasive tool, Johnson emphasized. “I would again reiterate,” he said, “straight talk—not sweet talk!”

Tiemann says FTC lax in monitoring industry

If the federal government is really serious about its concern over the cost of prescription drug products, said 1975-76 APhA president Kenneth E. Tiemann of Texas, the Federal Trade Commission and other federal watchdog agencies should enforce already existing federal statutes.

Tiemann spoke April 24 before the closing session of the APhA Annual Meeting in San Francisco after receiving the oath of office from outgoing president Robert C. Johnson.

The new APhA president was particularly critical of recent remarks made by FTC Chairman Lewis Engman in Texas—remarks which criticized state laws that prevent pharmacists from advertising the prices of their prescription drug products. Engman said then that prescription prices in Texas vary by as much as 900%.

“If Chairman Engman and his colleagues were really serious,” Tiemann said, “they would vigorously enforce the Robinson-Patman Law which was enacted to eliminate that apparent 900% cost differential to the pharmacist.

“It isn’t hard to understand why one pharmacist may charge twice as much as another pharmacist if that pharmacist has to pay twice as much for the product,” Tiemann continued. “It is this kind of discrimination in the pricing practice of manufacturers and wholesalers which is primarily responsible for the spread in prices to patients and which puts the average pharmacist in a poor light in the eyes of the consumer movement.”

Tiemann said FTC is following the course of least resistance in trying to get at the high cost of drugs through the pharmacist and asked his audience: “Why else would FTC carefully avoid making waves in the mill pond of big business?"

The public must understand, Tiemann said, that manufacturers, and not pharmacists, are generally responsible for the wide price differentials so often reported in the media, and that mandatory prescription price advertising would mislead the public and result in a situation where medicines were treated as mere commodities, without regard to the critical professional services the pharmacist is trained to provide his patients.

In making his inaugural address, Tiemann pledged a concerted effort to reverse a process “that has allowed the pharmaceutical and insurance industries to price us to the edge of bankruptcy.

“No more!” Tiemann said. “Your Association has taken a new sense of purpose in recent years. We will preserve, protect, and defend pharmacy in new and important ways.”
APhA honors Lloyd Parks with Remington Medal

Lloyd M. Parks accepted the Reming- ton Honor Medal, one of pharmacy's highest awards, at the APhA Annual Meeting on April 22.

Parks served as APhA president in 1971-72 and as Chairman of the Board of Trustees from 1967-69. Most recently, he served as chairman of the APhA Task Force on Specialties in Pharmacy, and in his acceptance address, spoke of the challenges facing the profession in the field of education.

Currently dean of the Ohio State University College of Pharmacy, Parks told the Remington Medal Dinner audience that pharmacy educators are beginning to address themselves to the problems of enhancing professional practice as well as providing pharmacy students with a sound background in the sciences.

Parks also acknowledged that the questions of continuing education and competency continue to pose problems for the profession. Parks said they could be solved only if the profession first begins by asking "fundamental questions."

"What are the competencies the pharmacist needs?" Parks asked, "and how can they be measured?" To my knowledge, no group has addressed this question and until we have a valid answer to it we will continue to spin our wheels in an aimless manner."

Once that question and others are answered, Parks said, the profession must be willing to demonstrate that its members have retained or improved their competence against approved and accepted standards.

Said Parks: "The only valid way, in my opinion, is to require the pharmacist to demonstrate his continuing competence by a challenge examination as a requirement for relicensure. Unless we as a profession and as individual members of that profession are willing to commit ourselves and see it through to that extent, then we should quit kidding ourselves about mandatory continuing education and recognize that, in its present status, it is largely of window-dressing value for our self-image, and, hopefully, for our public image."

AGP establishes new nuclear pharmacy section

The Executive Committee of the APhA Academy of General Practice has approved the formation of a new Academy Section—the AGP Section on Nuclear Pharmacy.

Approved during the Annual Meeting, the formation of the new AGP section recognizes the growing field of nuclear pharmacy and the close liaison both APhA and AGP have maintained with practicing nuclear pharmacists throughout the country in recent years.

The practice of nuclear pharmacy is concerned with all aspects of the profession relevant to the preparation and dispensing of radiopharmaceuticals. Currently, pharmacists have attained a specialized capability in the practice of nuclear pharmacy either through a formalized educational experience or through supervised clinical experience.

AGP president James R. Ramseth said the Section on Nuclear Pharmacy will focus on several specific objectives: specialized nuclear pharmacy continuing education programs; planning of regional institutes and workshops of interest to nuclear pharmacists; providing a forum for nuclear pharmacist input in APhA policy; encouraging nuclear pharmacists to contribute to Academy publications; and helping nuclear pharmacists solve problems of mutual concern.

Pending the results of upcoming AGP elections, president Ramseth will soon name acting officers of the new Academy of General Practice Section on Nuclear Pharmacy.