

American College of Emergency Physicians
Observation Medicine Section Meeting
ACEP21
November 8, 2021
MINUTES

Participants

Section members participating for all or part of the meeting included: Christopher Caspers, MD, Chair; Matthew Wheatley MD, FACEP, Immediate Past Chair; Alexei Wagner, MD, Councillor; Christopher Baugh, MD, MBA, FACEP; Kaitlyn Beels, MD; Robert Bennett, MD, FACEP; Abhinav Chandra, MD, FACEP; Caroline Cox, MD; Kevin Drechsel, MD, FACEP; Brian Hiestand, MD, FACEP; George Hughes, MD; James Humble, MD; Sharon Mace, MD, FACEP; Anwar Osborne, MD, FACEP; Hetal Patel, MD; Michael Ross, MD, FACEP; Carissa Tyo, MD, FACEP.

Others participating for all or part of the meeting included: Sarah Todt; Greg Weingart, MD, FACEP; Sandra M. Schneider, MD, FACEP, ACEP Staff Liaison; and Julie Wassom, ACEP staff.

Agenda

Introduction
Council and Board Updates
Lou Graff Award Proposal
Telemedicine and Obs
Obs Billing: Now and Future
Literature Review
Nursing Work and Resource Constraints

Major Points Discussed

Dr. Caspers opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and then talking about the challenges emergency physicians have faced during the COVID pandemic, especially those running observation units. He then shared that the section worked during the last year with the Emergency Medicine Practice Committee to revise the policy statement “Emergency Department Observation Services.” The updated policy statement is now posted on the Observation Section website, and Dr. Caspers encouraged members to review the recent changes.

Dr. Mace then proposed that a new award for the section be created, the Lou Graff for Contributions to Observation Medicine Award, to honor someone each year who has been a trailblazer in observation medicine. A subcommittee of the committee would need to develop award criteria, and then that proposal would go to the Board for approval. Once approved, the section, along with others in ACEP, could nominate a person for the award each year. Those interested in serving on the award subcommittee should reach out to Dr. Caspers at christopher.caspers@nyulangone.org.

Dr. Hughes then gave a presentation on the use of telemedicine and observation medicine at his site at Emory, along with information about the current reimbursement environment. Following the presentation, Dr. Wagner shared that many of the Council resolutions this year involved the practice of advanced practice providers. Discussion ensued about what next steps the section could/should take regarding this issue. Dr. Osborne suggested that the section create a subcommittee to draft a Council resolution on this subject for next year.

In Dr. Granovsky's absence, Sarah Todt gave a presentation on observation coding and billing, as well as current documentation guidelines and upcoming guideline and code changes in 2023. More information on these will probably be included in the final rule in November. She also explained codes that have been impacted by the COVID pandemic, including the ones that address telehealth.

Dr. Wagner provided a report about the many Council resolutions that were addressed on a variety of subjects, including advanced practice providers (as mentioned previously), telehealth education for residents, rural emergency medicine, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Dr. Schneider then shared an update about ACEP and the recent annual meeting in Boston, which was very successful. She also gave updates regarding shared poll results about job satisfaction, pay, mid-level providers and corporate medical groups, as well as the ACGME Residency Review Committee's upcoming review this year of the standards for EM residencies. Information was also provided regarding the emergency medicine workforce, a new task force investigating a potential ED accreditation program, and a new proposed strategic plan. Dr. Schneider encouraged section members to give input and comments about the plan before the comment deadline.

Following Dr. Schneider's presentation, Dr. Wheatley and Dr. Osborne provided a literature review of several articles that were interesting and applicable to observation medicine. Topics included:

- Racial and ethnic disparities in observation patients
- InterQual criteria accuracy for observation versus inpatient patients with syncope
- Endocrine consultation for HbA1c greater than or equal to 9.0%
- Guidelines for reasonable and appropriate care in the ED (GRACE) for patients with recurrent, low-risk chest pain
- Management of minor traumatic brain injury in an ED observation unit
- HEART score accuracy
- Management of acute drug overdose in observation units
- Geriatric observation.

Dr. Schneider ended the meeting by discussing the current nursing shortage and a program at the University of Florida that has sought to alleviate the difficulties of that situation with innovative approaches. After discussions with their nurses, the program implemented several solutions that aligned with waivers received from CMS and implemented under crisis standards of care, including:

- Reducing neuro exam documentation for TIA or stroke patients
- Limiting documentation for patient reassessments
- Minimizing patient screening questions
- Recruiting medical, nursing, nurse practitioner, physician assistant students to act as nursing assistants
- Using assistants to provide bedside care, bathroom assists/transport
- Allowing pharmacists to administer routine drugs

She encouraged section members to talk with their nursing staff about which of these solutions might be possible to use in their facilities during these extraordinary times. She also suggested that members contact Dr. Kelly Gray-Eurom at kgrayeurom@acep.org with additional questions.

Dr. Caspers ended the meeting by thanking everyone who participated during the meeting.

With no more information to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.