

Public Policy Report

Kathleen Murphy BSN RN CWON

Hi all! The Public Policy committee has remained quite busy through the last few months. Here is some of what is going on out there and up there on the Hill:

Our lobbyist, Bill Applegate, is working with Lee Ann Krapfl and the Public Policy Committee on a web-based CEU program on politics in the healthcare arena and how to maneuver within the system. No date on when it will be available at this time.

The Public Policy Committee was asked to weigh in on a situation that occurred earlier this summer regarding reimbursement for intermittent catheterization. A SCI person who said he was representing several consumer groups partnered with a major manufacturer of catheters in order to lobby Congress to get CMS to pay for sterile catheters for intermittent catheterizations in an effort to reduce UTI's. They asked the WOCN to support this effort publicly and join them in making this motion to Congress. Dorothy Doughty was asked by the national leadership to look into this, and she found that there was no empiric evidence to support that sterile catheter use prevents more infections than using clean technique. The WOCN opted not to support this effort until more research proves that this is factual information. The Public Policy committee was asked to weigh in on this situation and create a white paper on Clean vs Sterile technique and a statement of policy regarding partnering with a vendor to lobby congress on policy changes. Once the Clean vs Sterile Technique statement was created, Kate Lawrence and Dorothy Doughty reviewed for accuracy. The document is now going to the WOCN council for official approval. These items, once approved by the national council, will be available to members via the WOCN website.

NIWI prep is ongoing. Lee Ann Krapfl reports that the dates for NIWI 2008 are March 9 – 11. The internship is being decreased by one day and reportedly costs are to decrease. This is based on feedback from last years group. Public Policy committee is working with Bill Applegate to set up a WOC day on the hill during NIWI where all WOC's can come together talk about issues, how we are interfacing with Congress as an organization and then go up on the Hill with Bill. Feedback from last years group was that that day with Bill was the best day of the conference. The WOCN has talked about decreasing and/or limiting their scholarships to NIWI. This will impact the SCR application process.

ANA sent out information regarding proposed changes in fit testing. Rep. Roger Wicker (R-MS) has added a rider to the Labor, HHS Appropriations Bill that "makes it impossible for OSHA to require fit testing of respirators used to protect nurses from infectious diseases." ANA opposes the bill and has asked for other nursing organizations to send letters and official statements to congress asking them not to support this initiative. APIC is not supporting ANA's effort. PLEASE, if you value your health and you feel strongly about this issue, contact your Congressmen and Senators. Those of you in MS-please write to Rep. Wicker. Bill Applegate is drafting a letter on this topic. Changes coming to hospitals October 1, 2007. The new rule from CMS states that all patients admitted to the hospital MUST have a skin inspection and documentation of inspection upon admission. All pressure ulcers will be under the jurisdiction of CMS. They are going to be tracking hospital acquired pressure ulcers very closely. What is

found (as trends) during this first year will affect your billing policies and reimbursement beginning in 2008. No longer can you add on a hospital-acquired pressure ulcer to your DRG list for reimbursement. Scale for CMS reimbursement will be changing forms as well. The basic rate will decrease and there will be a MS DRG: a combination of the current DRG and the MSDS found in LTAC. WOCN and NPUAP do not feel that the current proposed codes don't accurately capture what is going on with pressure-related breakdown. Keep your eyes peeled for more in depth information regarding this issue. Welcome to the world of sanctions hospital WOC's!