

# What we did for you in 2011

The WSMA provides an array of member benefits including aggressively advocating for physicians with health insurers, in Olympia, and with our congressional delegation, quality improvement efforts, physician legal support, educational opportunities, and proactively engaging with the patient community to improve health and wellness.

## Strong Legislative Advocacy

Legislation passed on the state and national levels directly affects how you practice medicine. The WSMA has worked hard this year to make sure physician interests were represented. The WSMA:

- Successfully defeated any fee or tax increases on physicians. In the final 2011-2013 biennial budget, there were no fee or tax increases for the medical community, in spite of a number of proposals to do so.
- Ensured patient access to care through preservation of the Basic Health Program.
- Saved Medicaid coverage for interpreter services, sparing physician practices from absorbing the considerable overhead costs.
- Warded off any direct payment cuts for physicians in state programs.
- Defeated efforts to ban “balance billing” of privately-insured patients by non-contracted providers who render emergency services in a hospital emergency department.
- Successfully opposed efforts to change the state’s Medicaid fraud statutes to allow private, non-government individuals to receive portions of recovered funds in cases brought against physicians.

- Worked on Senate and House bills to increase the number of children receiving needed immunizations by establishing new requirements for parents opting out of immunizations for their children.
- Defeated efforts to impose a sales tax on non-emergent plastic surgery.
- Worked to ensure that federally-qualified rural health clinics (RHCs) will be paid their standard cost-related encounter rate for prenatal and well-child services provided to women and children enrolled in the Medicaid and State Children’s Health Insurance programs.
- Other WSMA-supported bills that passed include: Insurance Exchange, Primary Care Home and Chronic Care Management, Demographic Information from Physicians and Physician Assistants, and Ambulatory Surgery Center Licensing.

## Practice Resource Center

The WSMA Practice Resource Center assists practices with one-on-one guidance on claim problems, coding guidance and operations questions.

- Launched the Sustainability and Transformation Initiative to assist physicians in understanding and implementing options for their practices.
- Assisted physicians who had “audits” by commercial insurers, helping to achieve substantial reductions in alleged overpayments.
- Advocated on behalf of practices that received letters from a health plan with unsubstantiated allegations of overuse of coding modifiers.
- Helped practices that were experiencing billing problems with Boeing’s change in carriers.

- Aided physicians who were facing contract changes in a health plan’s provider network.

## Leadership Development

- Created an online physician leadership course, in partnership with the University of Washington Graduate Programs in Health Administration and UW Professional and Continuing Education. The course focuses on leadership and conflict management, strategic planning, safety and quality management, finance, and communication and advocacy.

## Quality Improvement

The WSMA Foundation for Health Care Improvement helps physician practices improve the quality of care they deliver.

- Developed the Clinical Performance Improvement Network (CPIN), offering nearly a dozen free lunchtime webinars and other on-site presentations on topics directly related to improving performance. Participants earned CME credit at no cost for each session.
- Developed a five-year plan for statewide quality improvement — with improving coordination of care the highest priority.
- Created an interactive tool to assist practices in evaluating electronic medical record (EMR) capabilities. The toolkit is available at no cost to assist all WSMA members.
- Closely tracked the draft federal regulations on Accountable Care Organizations (ACO), providing written comments to CMS, and working with our state’s Congressional Delegation in an effort to improve the program.

## Physician Legal Support

The WSMA regularly files “friend of the court” briefs in cases brought by others that raise issues of importance to the medical community. In addition, the WSMA will defend the rights of its members by directly filing lawsuits or initiating other legal actions on behalf of its members.

- Filed petition for a “writ of mandamus” to compel the Insurance Commissioner to comply with the law requiring health insurance companies to cover the costs of emergency medical services eliminating the need for balance billing of patients.
- Submitted “friend of the court” brief with Physicians Insurance and the AMA Litigation Center successfully preventing judicial repeal of one of the last standing measures of tort reform, the eight year statute of repose for medical malpractice claims.
- Advocated for greater fairness and transparency in hospital medical staff relations including peer review, disruptive behavior and fair hearing policies through a joint work group with the Washington State Hospital Association.
- Through an agreement with Physician Legal Services of Washington PLLC, provided discounted legal representation to hospital medical staffs.

## Patient Resources

The WSMA provides numerous resources and tools — for patients and physicians — on a variety of health and wellness topics.

- Launched a patient communication campaign under the broad umbrella of Patient Safety — health literacy, successful care transitions, safe medication use, smart ED use, and advanced directives are some of the planned topics.
- Developed a brochure — aimed at parents — to educate about the risks and benefits of immunizations. The brochure is available to physicians to give to their patients.
- Launched the online patient newsletter, WSMA Wellness Report and introduced WSMA Doc Talk, a blog that will feature members as experts on topics of health and wellness.

More detail about how the WSMA works on your behalf can be found at [www.wsma.org](http://www.wsma.org).

### WSMA – Physician Driven, Patient Focused.

Join your colleagues who belong to the WSMA, making it your strong, effective, physician-directed advocate.

If you are not a member of the WSMA and would like to join, go to [www.wsma.org](http://www.wsma.org) or call (206) 441-9762 or (800) 552-0612.

## What we did for you in 2011

**The WSMA** – Working hard for you, your practice, and your patients to help make Washington the best place to practice medicine and to receive care.



<b>SEATTLE OFFICE</b>	<b>OLYMPIA OFFICE</b>
2033 6th Avenue, Suite 1100	1800 Cooper Pt. Rd. SW, Bldg 7, Suite A
Seattle, WA 98121	Olympia, WA 98502
(206) 441-9762	(360) 352-4848
1(800) 552-0612	1(800) 562-4546

Email: [wsma@wsma.org](mailto:wsma@wsma.org)  
Web site: [www.wsma.org](http://www.wsma.org)

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