

AASLD PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

AGENDA FOR 2012

INTRODUCTION:

AASLD will continue to implement an aggressive governmental relations program focused on promoting liver health through the conduct of federally-supported and other research and the expansion of the provision of services to patients, both adults and children, regardless of ability to pay.

RESEARCH ISSUES:

AASLD strongly supports funding for scientific research and training throughout the federal government, as well as from other funding sources. Specifically:

- AASLD supports the highest attainable funding levels, as well as the promulgation of appropriate and progressive rules and regulations, to advance scientific progress rapidly throughout the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as envisioned by the Trans-NIH Action Plan for Liver Disease Research (TAPLDR), adopted by NIDDK in 2005 and periodically updated and applied to both communicable and non-communicable diseases. (AA, CA)
- AASLD supports the creation of a comprehensive trans-institute liver research network at NIH that would assure the continuation of the benefits of existing networks after their initial purpose has been completed. (AA)
- AASLD remains strongly opposed to the abolition of NIAAA and NIDA and its replacement with an addiction-focused institute, which will likely result in reduced opportunities to conduct critically-needed end-organ damage research. (AA, CA)
- AASLD supports funding through AHRQ, NIH and CDC, as appropriate, to define accurately and completely, the burden of liver disease, including liver cancer. (AA)
- AASLD supports a distinct effort to bring additional research attention to deadly cancers, including primary liver cancer, through the National Cancer Institute. (CA)
- AASLD supports the highest attainable funding levels for liver-related research through the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense and other government agencies. (CA)
- AASLD supports the practice innovations being sponsored by the Innovation Center at CMS and is actively working to ensure that these demonstrations reflect the needs of liver disease patients and hepatologists. (CA)
- AASLD supports a robust Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER) program working through the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), AHRQ and NIH that will assist hepatologists and their patients in

making appropriate clinical decisions related to diagnosis and treatment, while assuring effective training for researchers in CER methodologies. (M)

PATIENT CARE ISSUES:

AASLD supports federal policies and programs, as well as local action, that will improve liver health, enhance medical treatment for all patients with liver disease, reduce health disparities among liver disease patients, and promote liver wellness and prevention of disease. Specifically:

- AASLD supports the provision of liver health care to all Americans, regardless of ability to pay, through the effective implementation of the Affordable Care Act's rules and regulations to assure that treatment is provided to both communicable and non-communicable diseases. (AA)
- AASLD supports attacking the silent epidemic of viral hepatitis through careful monitoring of the implementation of the Viral Hepatitis Action Plan. Specific issues to be addressed include:
 - Improving surveillance;
 - Making hepatitis B and C screening routine under the Essential Health Benefits package of the ACA;
 - Ensuring everyone who is diagnosed receives access to appropriate care;
 - Investing in biomedical, behavioral and health services research;
 - Developing an integrated approach to reducing risk for infectious diseases;
 - Eliminating newborn HBV infections;
 - Eliminating healthcare associated HBV and HCV infections;
 - Promoting universal HBV vaccination;
 - Bolstering prevention campaigns and public awareness. (AA, CA, M)
- AASLD supports the highest attainable level of federal funding for states' efforts to prevent the spread of infectious liver diseases (particularly viral hepatitis), and to diagnose and treat those who are already infected. (CA)
- AASLD supports developing a stronger role with regard to chronic liver disease at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (AA)
- AASLD supports the development and implementation of quality measures that reflect the most current practice standards. (AA)
- AASLD supports efforts to improve the quality of care provided to patients, but remains concerned that quality programs with conflicting standards could pose an undue burden on providers. (M)
- AASLD recognizes that hepatologists alone cannot treat all patients afflicted with liver disease, most notably hepatitis, and will work with government, including the Office of the Secretary, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Resources and Services Administration, to develop and implement a liver disease curriculum for primary care providers. (AA)
- AASLD strongly encourages the FDA to implement policies that aggressively address adverse events caused by inadvertent overdoses of acetaminophen, particularly related to compound drugs. (AA)

- AASLD supports an aggressive effort to diagnose and treat liver disease for veterans under the jurisdiction of the Veterans Health Administration and military personnel and their families under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense. (M)
- AASLD supports funding for workforce programs and the development of new payment delivery models that ensure that patients will have access to a well trained workforce, as well as funding for K awards, T-32 awards, and related programs. (M)

AASLD supports payment reform that ensures equitable payment for cognitive physicians that is vital for patient access and continuity of care. (CA)

TRANSPLANTATION-RELATED ISSUES:

AASLD supports strong federal action to increase the number of cadaveric and living donor organs, including livers, available to be transplanted into patients who are eligible pursuant to current transplantation standards.

- AASLD supports increasing funding to promote organ donation programs directed by the federal government, as well as through the states, to the highest attainable levels. (CA)
- AASLD supports continuing research at the NIH designed to reduce the need for organs to be transplanted and designed to improve outcomes from transplantation. (CA)

KEY TACTICS

To fulfill its agenda, AASLD will continue to increase its visibility as the premiere scientific organization dedicated to the prevention and cure of liver disease and promotion of liver wellness. AASLD will:

- Meet at least annually with key leaders in NIH, CDC, FDA, AHRQ, the VA and other agencies, as well as in Congress through sponsorship of Liver Capitol Hill Day in collaboration with patients and key patient advocacy groups.
- Engage the AASLD membership in advocacy efforts that elicit support from lawmakers on legislation that advances the Association's public policy agenda, through the use of outreach technology.
- Inform decision makers via letters, emails and meetings concerning its accomplishments in liver education and awareness, and important research breakthroughs made by AASLD members related to prevention, treatment and cures of liver disease.
- Provide contact information sheets to ensure that the expert testimony of its members will be at the disposal of the press, state and national officials.
- Support the Governing Board in its efforts to obtain greater public recognition of liver disease and of AASLD's effort to fight it. Use this as a basis for press releases, press conferences, high visibility meetings, awards etc., as appropriate.

- Work in partnership with government, industry and other nonprofit patient and professional associations to achieve these aims.

Key: (AA) = Active Advocacy; (CA) = Coalition Advocacy; (M) = Monitoring