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By Beth Bales

The American Medical Association's Board of Trustees has named Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS) longtime coding expert and member Robert M. Zwolak, MD, as the AMA alternative representative to the organization's RVS Update Committee (RUC), and alternative vice chair.

The RUC is a unique multispecialty committee dedicated to describing the resources required to provide physician services, which the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) considers in developing Relative Value Units (RVUs).

"Dr. Zwolak brings great skill and experience to the RUC process and is the ideal individual to represent the needs of vascular surgeons in this role," said SVS president Ronald L. Dalman, MD. "This is another of his many substantive contributions to the work and mission of the SVS."

Matthew Sideman, MD, chair of the SVS Policy and Advocacy Council, has worked with Zwolak on these issues for 15 years. "The SVS is a small society without a permanent seat on the committee. We should be extremely proud to have one of our own selected for this leadership position," Sideman said.

Representatives from nearly 40 national medical specialty societies endorsed Zwolak's nomination. This was based on his "long-standing experience and invaluable contribution to the RUC process in several capacities for over 20 years. ... Dr. Zwolak's experience with the resource-based relative value scale [RBRVS] is extraordinary, bar none."

Zwolak, a former SVS president, is chief of the surgical service for the Manchester Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Manchester, New Hampshire, and for the White River Junction VA Medical Center in White River Junction, Vermont.

Sideman, added, "I have had the tremendous good fortune to learn the RUC from Dr. Zwolak. I have worked side by side with him for the past 15 years. His knowledge of the committee, its processes, and its history are unequalled. His selection as alternate vice chair is a recognition of his years of service."

Zwolak said, "I hold profound respect for the accomplishments of the RUC in shaping the relative value world in which we all live, and I believe deeply in the fundamental concept that healthcare professionals can work as a team to appropriately assess these values." Zwolak's three-year term will begin in March 2021.

Dues and membership information

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Published on Society for Vascular Surgery (<https://vascular.org>)

Did you pay your 2021 SVS dues? As next year begins, those who did not could see a lapse in their benefits.

Graduated Candidates in year four of their “graduated candidate” membership must transition to Active membership.

Those who did not apply for such membership by Dec. 1 this year could also see their benefits interrupted.

SVS has many new and thriving initiatives, including the just-debuted Branding Toolkit to help members promote their expertise with referring physicians; the active community on SVSConnect; wellness and leadership initiatives; a Mentor Match program; and many more benefits.

Additionally, members also receive the Journal of Vascular Surgery publications. All of this is open only to members. Email membership@vascularsociety.org

Article Date: Tuesday, December 1, 2020

Author: Re-posted from the December 2020 issue of Vascular Specialist

Tags: Vascular Specialist Tags

Article Type: Article