Advocacy Recap: PSA Screening

In 2016, the American Urological Association set a goal and ultimately was successful in highlighting the intrinsic value of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) testing to various federal entities.

**USPSTF Reform**

The need for USPSTF reform stems from their recommendation four years ago against PSA-based screening for prostate cancer for all men, *regardless of risk*. This contentious decision was made without meeting with relevant stakeholders during the review process or having medical specialists serve on the USPSTF.

The importance of discussing PSA testing directly with federal agencies and other bodies was on full display earlier this year when the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced it was temporarily suspending the development of a draft non-PSA screening quality measure. This came after the urology community (including AUA members, patients and an AUA-led coalition of physician and patient advocacy groups) responded swiftly and strongly with substantive and extensive comments on the draft measure to CMS. In fact, when responding to these public comments in March, the agency promised to work with the AUA and specialty societies to develop other such measures in the future.

**PSA is a priority**

The AUA also placed a high priority on working with other non-prostate cancer patient and provider groups to build a broader network of support for USPSTF reform. For example, the Alliance of Specialty Medicine, which is a collection of provider groups representing various specialties (i.e., dermatology, ophthalmology, neurology) and includes the AUA, officially endorsed the USPSTF Transparency and Accountability Act for the first time in 2016. As a result, this topic was a major focal point during the Alliance’s annual advocacy conference in Washington. More than 85 physicians, including nine AUA members, flooded Capitol Hill and held a total of 142 meetings with legislators and their staff.

In addition, AUA worked with its Alliance colleagues in getting report language inserted into the Senate’s version of the Fiscal Year 2017 Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Appropriations Act, which passed that chamber in June. The language touched on some of the major components of H.R. 1151, such as urging the inclusion of appropriate experts in the development of USPSTF recommendations.

Finally, in conjunction with building support for a legislative fix to the USPSTF recommendations process, AUA began petitioning members of the House Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Health to hold a congressional hearing on the subject through numerous coalition sign-on letters and holding face-to-face meetings with committee staff and member offices.