

THE GEORGIA

CHIROPRACTOR

WINTER 2017

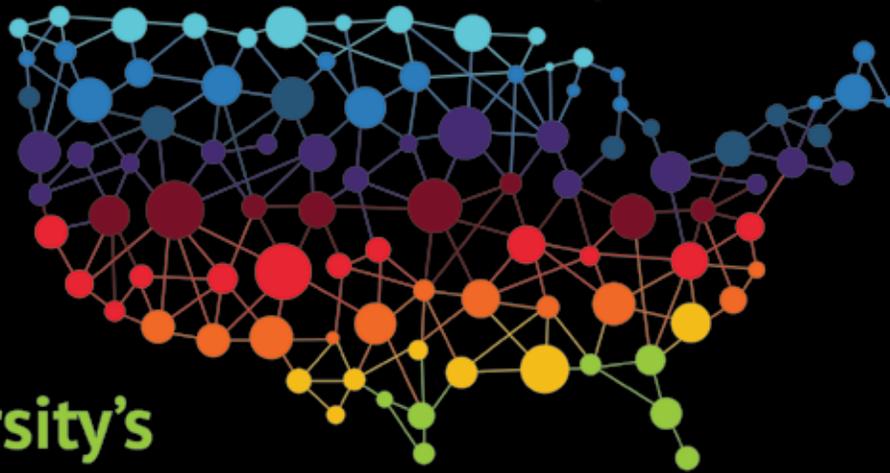
LAST ISSUE
FOR NONMEMBERS -
MEMBER APP INSIDE!



WHAT'S
NEW WITH
MEDICARE
REPORTING

PREVIEW OF 2017
LEGISLATIVE
SESSION - INSIDE!

GCA ROCKS AT
FALL CONFERENCE



By: Mary Ellen Leffard

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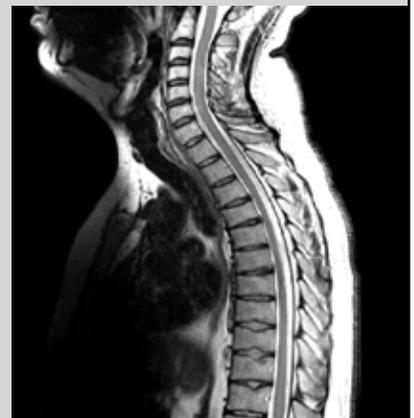


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Getting fit tops the resolution list.

On the cover:

GCA President-Elect and Chiropractor of the Year award recipient Dr. Leana Kart with Dr. Vincent Erario, the William H. Vaughn Humanitarian of the Year. Kart and Erario received their awards during GCA's 104th Annual Fall Conference & Trade Show.

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I hereby apply for membership in The Georgia Chiropractic Association, Inc. I understand that my application is subject to membership committee approval and election by the Board of Directors, and that I will be notified of its action. I do hereby agree to abide by and uphold Bylaws and Code of Ethics of the Association. I also understand that failure to remit dues will result in loss of membership and all rights and privileges thereof. Membership includes all rights and privileges as provided in the Bylaws.

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 Date _____ Referred By _____
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Changing Things up for the New Year

The beginning of a new year is an exciting time for many, and that's no exception for our association. We have many new plans for 2017 and beyond for GCA.

I'm honored to have been sworn in as the Georgia Chiropractic Association's president, and am looking forward to the year ahead. I've been in practice for 30 years in Stockbridge, and my wife and I recently welcomed our first grandchild into the family. It's been an exciting past few months, to say the least! I'm eager to keep that positive momentum going as GCA moves forward into the new year.

It's a GCA presidential tradition to choose a key word that follows their term as president. For my predecessor Dr. Edwin Davis, his word was "accountability." I know our association thrived under Dr. Davis' leadership, and I thank him for his service to our association.

My word for this year is "transparency." According to businessdictionary.com, this translates to a "lack of hidden agendas and conditions, accompanied by the availability of full information required for collaboration, cooperation and collective decision making." This is my vision for GCA – an association with a membership pulling together with the common goal of promoting and protecting the chiropractic profession.

A strong association comes from a strong membership, and GCA is doing many things in 2017 to further strengthen you and your practice. First of all, one of the things I've been a strong proponent for has been our work with media expert, the six-time EMMY® award-winning Dr. Shawne Duperon. If you attended her class during our Fall Conference, you know what a powerhouse she is. Our association is working with Dr. Duperon in 2017 to better our communication skills with each other, with our member chiropractors and with chiropractic patients. She'll also be at this year's spring and fall conferences, so be sure to not miss her class!

With Georgia's 2017 legislative session about to begin, you will want to download GCA's app – all you need to do is visit the app store on your iPhone or Android device, and search for "GCALegis." You'll have all of the information of what legislation GCA is working on to protect chiropractic, along with contact information for your representatives and any updates we have to share throughout the 40-day session.

One of our big benefits for GCA members is access to our Insurance Committee, and we're working on ways to make that process easier. We'll be hosting 60-minute webinars monthly where you can come and ask your questions to receive an immediate response. If you're unable to make the webinar, don't worry – you can still access our Insurance Committee by submitting your question to the GCA office at 770-723-1100.

We're also working on ways to make the online experience better – members will soon notice a bit of an updated look when they log into our website. Along with our legislative app, Fall Conference attendees can keep up with their schedules via our conference app, plus members will soon be able to download a generic association app where you can register for events and connect with fellow members – all right on your phone.

This is just a small sample of the many new benefits and ways we're making your lives easier and better for 2017 – it's never been a better time to be a GCA member, and I truly believe it's only going to get better from here. Won't you join us?



Dr. Richard Buchanan • President

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Georgia
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The Power of Association

THE GEORGIA
CHIROPRACTOR

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Founded 1912

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Each year, the GCA president and I attend the Congress of Chiropractic State Associations' annual meeting. Before the first session even started this year, I got a great piece of advice from one of the other executive directors.

In casual conversation, I mentioned we were considering taking this publication to digital only. She said her association had tried that and it had not gone well. As a result of that conversation and the input of those who responded to a GCA survey on the topic, we changed our plans.

That casual conversation prevented long-time members from the consternation of no longer receiving a printed copy of this magazine and the staff from hours of work fielding complaints from frustrated members.

That is the power of association.

When you belong to an association of fellow professionals who do what you do, you can learn from their experiences and save time, effort and money by NOT reinventing the wheel. And that is just what the power of association can do for you personally.

The power of association is also key to legislative success. If we could go to our state legislators and tell them that we represent EVERY doctor of chiropractic in the state, not just a percentage, they will listen to us. This is extremely important as we look to pass co-pay legislation this session to ensure your patients can afford to see you. The insurance lobby is incredibly powerful, but the more members we have, the more effective our advocacy will be.

If you are not a member of the Georgia Chiropractic Association, I urge you to join TODAY. Fill out the member application on p. 4! We need you, and you need us to ensure the growth of chiropractic in the state.



Valerie Smith, M.A. • Executive Director



ASSOCIATION NEWS



It's a GCA Holiday!

In what is rapidly becoming a fun tradition, GCA's Annual Holiday Party was a fun night of celebrating both what we achieved in 2016, and what's to come in 2017! Nearly 100 people (including Santa!) attended the event at Marietta's Cosmopolitan Live on Dec. 8, including many students from nearby Life University. Two lucky attendees received FREE conference attendance in 2017, and we also collected several toys for GCA member Dr. Lou Hilliard's service, 'Santa's Coming to Cobb,' the largest Christmas party for children in the state! We also raffled off a 2017 ChiroCode Desk Book (a \$129 value) for GCA member Dr. Terry Southerland, who was involved in a horrific car accident in October 2016. Proceeds from that raffle were donated to Dr. Southerland and his family as he continues in his recovery. Read below to learn how you can help Dr. Southerland.

More photos are available on our Facebook page, facebook.com/georgiachiropracticassociation.

Help GCA member Dr. Southerland Following Car Wreck

One of GCA's own members, Dr. Terry Southerland, is recovering from serious injuries sustained during a car accident in October 2016. He suffered a fracture to T9, four disc protrusions and two tears in his right shoulder. His short term memory has also been affected.

He can't practice at this time, and it's a possibility that he might not be able to practice again.

We've set up a GoFundMe page to assist Dr. Southerland during this time. You can help out by visiting gofundme.com/gca-member-dr-terry-southerland.

New Member Pricing for 2017

In an effort to streamline our services and make a GCA membership even more convenient, we have changed our membership payment structure for 2017. (For our current members, these changes do not currently impact you; only new or returning members should use the new member application and pricing structure.)

SEE
MEMBER APP,
ON PAGE 4!

We still offer the option for new or returning members to pay their annual membership in full at the beginning of the year, but for those who wish to pay monthly, we have NEW levels from which to select. A Bronze membership at \$55 a month is dues only, while a Silver membership at \$74 a month is dues plus 20 hours of continuing education credits (allowing a Silver member to attend up to 20 CE hours at any GCA conference). A Gold membership is dues plus a membership to GCA Political Action Committee, and a Platinum membership includes dues, PAC membership and up to 20 CE hours.

Full pricing information is on the member application on p. 4. If you have any questions or need assistance in filling out what option is best for you, please contact our office at 770-723-1100.

New Association Benefits for 2017

We're working to make your membership with the Georgia Chiropractic Association an even better experience for 2017! Along with our already great member benefits, we're adding a few new pieces to make your life easier and your chiropractic career soar:

- **Insurance Q&As.** Along with our members-only Insurance Hotline, beginning Jan. 5 we're offering monthly webinars where you can come on and ask your specific insurance-related question. These webinars are FREE for members. You can find specific dates and times on our website, gachiro.org.
- **A better online experience.** You will soon be able to sign onto our website, gachiro.org, using your Facebook or LinkedIn credentials! Once signed in, you'll also notice a more user-friendly social sharing experience, where you can post status updates and communicate with our chiropractor members from across the state. And, for those of you who are often on your phones or other mobile devices, we're working on making our website more mobile-friendly, so you'll soon be able to access it more easily from any browser on any device.
- **New legislative and event apps.** Our Fall Conference attendees already got a taste of our NEW event app, easily downloadable with your full schedule and speaker notes. We will once again have this benefit at the 2017 Fall Conference, and we're also proud to unveil our GCA Legislative App for the 2017 session, beginning Jan. 9 and going through March. By searching for 'GCALegis' in your app store, you can gain access to bills GCA is working on this session and your legislators' contact information. If you don't know your legislator or what district you're in, you will also be able to find out via this app. We're very excited to offer this convenient legislative app for Georgia chiropractors.
- **A better magazine experience.** Beginning in our next issue of this magazine, Spring 2017, we will only be mailing it to our current GCA members and state legislators. In a recent survey we conducted about our magazine, an overwhelming majority of our current GCA members find this magazine to be a valuable benefit to them! If you're not a GCA member and would like to continue your subscription (along with gaining access to our multitude of other member benefits), please complete and mail in the member application at the front of this edition. (You can also call our office at 770-723-1100.)

Internally, GCA leadership is completing ongoing media training so that we may communicate the positives of chiropractic more effectively to the public. We also have several fun social events being planned for the new year, so definitely keep checking our website and your emails to stay on top of all of our GCA events for 2017. It's never been a better time to be a GCA member - join us today!

event calendar

FEB. 2, 2017

GCA's Annual Chiropractic Day at the Capitol

Sloppy Floyd Building,
Georgia State Capitol
Atlanta, Ga.

FEB. 4, 2017

GCA Board of Directors Meeting

Tucker, Ga.

FEB. 9, 2017

GCA Insurance Q&A Webinar

2:30-3:30 p.m.

Visit gachiro.org to register
and for future dates

MARCH 4, 2017

GCA's Advanced C.A. Program

Tucker, Ga.

APRIL 19-22, 2017

OIG/HIPAA Compliance Seminars

Presented by Ty Talcott, D.C.
of HIPAA Compliance Services
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JUNE 9-11, 2017

GCA's Annual Spring Conference & Trade Show

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Savannah, Ga.

OCT. 20-22, 2017

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NATIONAL NEWS

Texas Fighting Ruling Against Scope of Practice

Texas chiropractors are vowing to continue the fight following a devastating legal ruling to take away their usual practice of diagnosing patients, a move supported by the Texas Medical Association.

“What happens in Texas has the potential to spread quickly and impact the future of chiropractic,” an email distributed by the Congress of Chiropractic State Associations read. “We must protect our profession!”

In October 2016, Travis County District Court Judge Rhonda Hurley signed a final judgment in favor of the Texas Medical Association in its lawsuit against the Texas Board of Chiropractic Examiners, declaring void their rules that permitted chiropractors to make medical diagnoses and to perform vestibular-ocular-nystagmus testing. The judge determined that authorizing certain chiropractors to perform VON testing exceeds their scope of practice.

“She also determined that the TBCE’s definition of ‘musculoskeletal system’ to include ‘nerves,’ its definition of ‘subluxation complex’ as a ‘neuromusculoskeletal condition,’ and its use of the term ‘diagnosis’ in its scope of practice rule, all exceed the scope of chiropractic, and are therefore void,” a press release via workerscompensation.com stated.

The Texas Board of Chiropractic Examiners is also facing a pending lawsuit from the Texas Association of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, seeking a declaration that the board rule authorizing chiropractors to perform acupuncture is invalid.

The Texas Chiropractic Association is preparing for a lengthy legal battle ahead in appealing this ruling. For more information and to donate to TCA, you can visit their website, chirotxas.org.

This is also a good reminder that the GCA Political Action Committee is dedicated to supporting pro-chiropractic legislators in our local, state and national governments. You can learn more about GCA-PAC, including how to become a member, by visiting our website at gachiro.org and selecting the ‘Influence’ tab.

Life University’s Dr. Holwick Elected to CCE Council

The Council on Chiropractic Education announced its 2016 Council election results in November, welcoming Life University’s Dr. Jana Holwick as one of five elected members overall.

Holwick is dean of the College of Graduate & Undergraduate Studies at Life.

“I also serve on the Academy of Site Team Visitors and have been a member of the Academy for 11 years,” Holwick said in a Life University press release. “Life will now have two individuals serving on the council, myself and Dr. Tim Gross, who currently serves as chair of the Site Team Academy and on the Executive Committee of the Council.”

The CCE is the national accrediting agency for Doctor of Chiropractic programs within the United States.



CASE STUDY

Fatty Infiltration: A Relationship Between Headaches and Low Back Pain

By Michael Vaughn, D.C.

INTRODUCTION

The patient is a 56-year-old right-handed female. In her history, she fell off a horse in college and ever since has had intermittent low back pain, on average, one episode per six to 12 months.

The patient was just recently involved in a rear-end collision. She had immediate low back pain with radiating pain into the buttocks and tingling down her whole right leg. She is also complaining of constant occipital frontal headaches.

EXAMINATION

An examination revealed muscular spasm and decreased range-of-motion at the cervicothoracic and lumbosacral regions. Also, the patient showed decreased left hip flexion, tightness in the left hamstring musculature and increased muscular spasm at the sub occipital musculature. The Soto Hall test was positive and referred pain into the cervicothoracic region and some discomfort into the lumbar region. Kemps was positive on her right and she expressed a positive straight leg raise on her right.

An MRI was performed. There is a central bulge with mass effect on the right. Mild stenosis with mild left foraminal narrowing along with multilevel DJD and we can see some fatty infiltration of the multifidi and other paraspinal musculature.

This case was managed by (1) recognizing the multifidi imbalance and fatty infiltration on the MRI. (2) Saggital (lateral) type exercises to address the loss of tone and denervation especially in the right multifidi and paraspinal musculature. (3) Manipulation (in this case Gonsted was preferred).

In discussion, the coronal plane is primarily driven by the function of the para-spinal muscles. These muscles are driven by the cerebellum and are multi-segmental innervated.

In the saggital plane, the multifidi are segmentally innervated. In discussion, the saggital plane is primarily the function of the paraspinal muscles. These muscles are driven by the cerebellum and are multi-segmental innervated. The coronal plane, the multifidi are segmentally innervated.

Weak multifidi can cause segmental displacement. I've seen this described as multifidi insufficiency that predisposes people to disc bulge or herniation.

“This case is a great example of the potential to strain the musculature that supports the lumbosacral region that could occur during manipulation.”

TREATMENT

Management for this case was (1) acute pain and inflammatory reduction. In this case, the patient saw an M.D. prior to chiropractic treatment. Usually we will see prescription of Medrol dose pack, Fentanyl, Hydrocodone, etc. Non-allopathic management could include heat/ice packs, fish oil, cat's claw etc. This is a bandage on the dam break but does not resolve the muscle imbalance potentially creating the environment for her L5 disc bulge.

(2) Activate the right multifidi and we can do this by moving the left arm at 90 degrees abduction. You will activate the multifidi at the L3, L4 and L5 levels. The weight of resistance applied to the arm will provide the activation stimuli to the multifidi.

We have been taught fatty infiltration is because of disuse. In the case of multifidi this is true, as we all sit at our desk leaning forward with our arms on our desk banging away at our keyboards.

(3) Last but not least, manipulation in that ROM or axis of rotation to increase joint function. This is in



conjunction with continuance to activate paraspinal and multifidi with pressure resistance. She also stood on a vibe plate while doing left arm abduction. A loss of joint function can lead to fatty infiltration as well and eventually to lumbar herniation. This may go back to Hilton's law, the nerve that innervates the joint will also innervate the muscles that move that joint.

You can see the same phenomena in the cervical region multifidi with the fatty infiltration occurring in the sub-occipital musculature. In the young patient, as the paraspinals lose their tone you will have a flattening or reversal of the loordotic curve and eventually as we all get older, this will change with the head leaning more forward, in some cases, six to eight inches forward of C7. The vestibular reflex will extend the occiput upon the atlas to axis in efforts to maintain the eyes and righting reflex

DISCUSSION

There is the question of why manipulation was not mentioned first in the plan of attack as far as treatment in this particular case study. This case is a great example of the potential to strain the musculature that supports the lumbosacral region that could occur during manipulation. In other words, decrease the chances of your patient feeling much worse after their chiropractic treatment from the weakened muscle unable to support the surrounding joints (vertebral segments) or endure an adjustment. The end result was a return to full functioning with emphasis to her lumbosacral region, pain free and a great reduction in exacerbating episodes.



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GCA PURSUING CO-PAY

Legislation in 2017

By Carly Sharec

The Georgia Chiropractic Association will spend the 2017 Georgia legislative session (beginning Jan. 9) focusing on two key pieces of legislation.

“We’ve got over 200 people in our Grassroots Committee now,” said Dr. John Webster, chairman of GCA’s Legislative Committee. “I’m so excited for the large number of people who want to be involved!

“Of course, it’s never too late,” he added, explaining that anyone interested in joining the GCA Grassroots Committee can go to gachiro.org and fill out an online form with their name, home address, phone number and email address. (You can also call the GCA office at 770-723-1100 to sign up.)

Members of the Grassroots Committee will be informed of the different pieces of legislation GCA is working on, and then will be called upon intermittently to contact their legislators.

“Committee members will know what the legislation is, what it looks like, the purpose of it, how to explain it, how to defend it,” Webster explained. “So as legislation is going through different committees, people who have legislators on those certain committees will be contacted by us to ask them to talk to their contact. They’ll have a script, they’ll know what’s going on.”

For 2017, GCA is focusing on two main pieces of legislation – one involving co-pay, and another involving criteria for chiropractic peer review.

Co-Pay Legislation

GCA and the Physical Therapy Association of Georgia will join forces on legislation involving co-pays, which would state that chiropractic and physical therapy co-pays cannot exceed a co-pay paid to a primary care physician. Currently, some insurances have chiropractors listed as specialists with exceedingly high co-pays.

“We’re looking at trying to address the problem of deductibles and copayments,” explained GCA’s lobbyist and attorney Aubrey Villines, J.D. “So that we get paid as a primary treating physician, or that the copay can’t be more than 50 percent of the services rendered that day.”

Villines is also speaking with other health care groups in hopes that they join GCA and PTAG in supporting this piece of legislation.

He explained that this bill would protect chiropractic patients.

“What’s happening now is that the benefits a patient has are becoming illusory,” Villines said. “They are going in there and they make their copayment, it’s like they didn’t have insurance at all. They’re paying for insurance, but then they have to pay the doctor this high amount.

“This is not for the doctor; it’s for the patient,” Villines added. “We’re going to get paid, but this keeps the patient from having to pay so much out-of-pocket.”

Peer Review

GCA also plans to address the potential conflict between peer review agents as addressed by the Board of Chiropractic Examiners, and the licensing of private peer review agents as addressed by the Insurance Commissioner.

Currently, both entities have different requirements for peer reviewers.

“There’s certain criteria to meet if you’re going to review claims in Georgia; for example, one is that you are a chiropractor and that you need to be in practice, et cetera,” Villines explained. “So it protects the field from people coming in who aren’t trained in chiropractic.”

Villines said the Insurance Commissioner’s office doesn’t have those types of requirements in place.

“It’s more general and generic,” he said. “So we’re trying to make them more specific for chiropractic. Right

Save the date! Chiropractic Day at the Capitol is Feb. 2, 2017. Check your emails and visit gachiro.org for event details.

now, there's a potential conflict between the two, so we're simply trying to solve the conflict."

This might be addressed by a rule change rather than a separate piece of legislation, Villines said.

Balance Billing

Villines said that something regarding balance billing (better known as "surprise" medical bills) might show up at some point during the legislative season.

"We think there will be a move to limit or prohibit it," he said, explaining how this move is more aimed at hospital emergency rooms, where a patient might receive multiple bills from each provider.

"Chiropractors aren't the problem," Villines said. "But we could be a part of unintended consequences surrounding this bill if it moves forward.

"There's going to be a lot of health-related legislation coming down the pike," Villines continued, regarding 2017. "Particularly if there is a repeal or tailoring of the Affordable Health Care act, or Obamacare."

Webster agreed.

"We don't know which direction it's going to go," Webster said. "But the thing to remember is, regardless of what the federal government does, we still have the ability to create an impact at a state level. That's why it's so important for chiropractors to develop a great relationship with their state legislators."



Download the GCA Legislative App to Stay Up-To-Date

Stay informed on the legislative matters that impact your profession and practice by downloading the Georgia Chiropractic Association's 2017 Legislative App.

"It's an amazing app," said Dr. John Webster, head of GCA's Legislative Committee. "It's going to make it so easy to get to know who your legislator is and how to contact them, plus it'll be updated with all of our bill information. It'll make everything very convenient."

Users of the GCA Legislative App will be able to read all current legislation during the session, including any updates and changes to the bills GCA is working on for the chiropractic profession. The app also contains contact information for all state legislators; users will be able to figure out what district they're in and who represents them with just a few swipes.

The app is now available for download; visit the app store on your device and search for "GCALegis" to find and download the app. You can also use the app via web browser, and the link is provided on the GCA website, gachiro.org.



MEDICARE SWITCHING TO QUALITY

Payment Program for 2017

By Carly Sharec

Changes beginning in Medicare reporting for 2017 won't immediately impact chiropractors, but *how* and *what* you report in the new year will affect you in the not-so-distant future.

Medicare reimbursements are moving from “fee for service” to having quality measurements determining payments, beginning in 2019.

Health care practitioners will fall under one of two sets of guidelines – Alternative Payment Models (APMs) or Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS). These provisions are collectively referred to as the Quality Payment Program, and will affect more than 600,000 clinicians who participate in Medicare nationwide.

Very few chiropractors will be APMs, at least for this first year – the majority will report as part of the Merit-based Incentive Payment System. (Currently, fewer than 5 percent of all Medicare practitioners would fall under the APM model, but the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services might expand those parameters in future years.)

Under MIPS, information should be submitted to Medicare in the following categories: Quality (familiar to many as PQRS), Improvement Activities (a new category), and Advancing Care Information (Medicare EHR Incentive Program/Meaningful Use.)

For 2017, the Quality category is weighted 60 percent, Advancing Care Information is 25 percent and Improvement Activities is 15 percent.

The 2017 minimum performance threshold requires one quality measure, one activity (under Improvement Activities) and up to five required measures under Advancing Care. (You might be exempt from a few of those measures; for example, as a Georgia chiropractor, electronic prescribing does not apply to you.)

The quality measures are the same two for chiropractors as under PQRS; there are more than 90 proposed activities to fulfill the requirement of Improvement Activities. (The full list is available on the CMS website.)

Completing the minimum requirements for 2017 means you won't get a penalty for not participating in 2019, but the more information you submit, the more highly you can be rewarded. For example, there's a 4 percent payment penalty in 2019 for not participating in 2017. On the other hand, if you reach the full participation threshold, you can receive up to a 4 percent bonus.

This year, 2017, is basically a “pick your pace” participation rate, with providers having four options to participate:

- a) Test the Quality Payment Program (by submitting at least one of the measures)
- b) Participate and submit for the full year beginning Jan. 1
- c) Participate for the full year, but submit data for a 90-day period
- d) Participate in an Alternative Payment Model in 2017

You can choose to report the entire year, or simply a 90-day period in order to be in compliance for 2017. The first performance period began on Jan. 1; you can start collecting performance data as late as Oct. 2. Those collecting data must submit it by March 31, 2018.

Exclusions apply for practitioners who are first-year Part B providers, if they bill through a facility or a hospital, or if they have \$30,000 or less in allowable charges *or* less than 100 unique patients for the 2017 calendar year. (However, as those numbers might decrease in the future, practitioners are encouraged to still practice submitted under the new guidelines.)

If you don't participate and aren't covered by an exclusion, it could result in an at least 4 percent reduction in

Do this in 2017 for a better-paid 2019!

To put yourself in the best possible position for 2019, here are a few things you can do this year:

- 1) Run practice reports;
- 2) Do math on your payments;
- 3) Learn your quality measures;
- 4) Pick reporting time (90 days or the full year) and method;
- 5) Update EHR if necessary. You can check if it is certified by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology; if it is, it should be ready to capture information for the MIPS advancing care information category, and certain measures for the quality category.

Source: *KMCUniversity.com* & *qpp.cms.gov*

2019 fees (going up to 5 percent in 2020, and up to 9 percent by 2022).

As reported by the American Chiropractic Association, “regardless of the option chosen, D.C.s must submit data by March 31, 2018. Also, despite flexibilities allowed under the final rule, it is in providers’ best interests to participate as much as possible during the transition year – and not just for the practice.”

In a general consensus, chiropractors who currently participate in the Physician Quality Repayment System should continue – and chiropractors who haven’t been participating should begin.

“At least get started with PQRS, because that is going to make a big difference moving forward,” said Laurie Simpson, C.C.A., C.C.C.P.C. Simpson is a GCA Advanced C.A. Program instructor and is a member of GCA’s Insurance Committee. “PQRS is a great way to start managing your Medicare patients.”

Find Help with Implementation

To put yourself in the best possible position for 2019, here are a few things you can do this year:

- CMS’ Quality Payment Program website: qpp.cms.gov
- QPP Fact Sheet: qpp.cms.gov/docs/Quality_Payment_Program_Overview_Fact_Sheet.pdf
- Support for Small Practices Fact Sheet: qpp.cms.gov/docs/QPP_Small_Practice.pdf
- MACRA Final Rule Webinars: cms.gov/Medicare/Quality-Initiatives-Patient-Assessment-Instruments/Value-Based-Programs/MACRA-MIPS-and-APMs/Quality-Payment-Program-Events.html
- Also, check with your EHR vendor

Source: *acatoday.org*

GCA Media Response: Medicare Error Reports

Many chiropractors and patients saw news reports beginning in October 2016 reporting Medicare has overpaid chiropractic treatments by millions of dollars. While the initial report was in the *Wall Street Journal*, a blog via ajc.com (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*) also posted the news.

The Georgia Chiropractic Association instantly responded by notifying the AJC how Georgia chiropractors have slashed Medicare claim error rates by 50 percent.

In 2015, the chiropractic claim error rate was 82 percent in Georgia. In 2016, the projected rate was 42 percent, according to sources with Cahaba, the Georgia Medicare Carrier.

“We’re heading in the right direction,” said Dr. Mark Cotney, Medicare sub-committee chairman of GCA’s Insurance Committee. “You can see it’s a huge decrease from previous years.”

An even greater improvement is expected for 2017.

“Dr. Cotney’s educational efforts as promoted by the Georgia Chiropractic Association is the strongest factor in the radical improvement in Georgia’s claim rate,” said Dr. Robert Hayden with GCA.

“We feel another reason for the decline is also a better understanding by Medicare reviewers of chiropractic methods,” Cotney added. “They understand chiropractic, and chiropractors understand how to properly report and file claims.”

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**FALL CONFERENCE
AND TRADE SHOW**
PRACTICE LIKE A ROCKSTAR



‘DANCIN’, SINGIN’ AND MOVIN’ TO THE GROOVIN’:

GCA Conference Hits All the Right Notes

By Carly Sharec

Atlanta was rockin’ and rollin’ in October when the Georgia Chiropractic Association’s 104th Annual Fall Conference & Trade Show hit the stage!

“This is our capstone event – while it’s in October, it’s almost like we’re celebrating New Year’s Eve for our association,” said GCA Past President Dr. Edwin Davis. “Along with providing full CE credits for chiropractors, this is also the time of year we join together to swear in our new GCA officers, honor and celebrate our award recipients for the year, and just have some fun with different social events.”

More than 400 attendees took advantage of the four-day weekend, with one of the event’s new non-CE classes getting things started that Thursday evening. This new non-CE track was full of classes designed to help chiropractors build their business, with practical tactics to begin implementing at 8 a.m. on Monday morning.

“I think the new non-CE classes were great, and I predict they’ll be a big draw in the future,” Davis said. “They were chock full of practical business infor-

mation. This is a great opportunity for chiropractors, especially if you already have CE credits.”

Conference Committee Chairwoman Dr. Leana Kart was also pleased with how the event turned out.

“One thing I’m particularly proud of this year was the inaugural Mary Watkins Ladies’ Tea,” Kart said. “We invited around 30 women up to the President’s Suite for tea time. This was another opportunity to bond with and support each other, particularly as women in the field. I think we can expect this to become another annual tradition for GCA.”

At GCA’s annual board meeting that Friday afternoon, the 2017 officers were sworn into their roles, with Dr. Richard Buchanan taking the helm as GCA President.

“I’m looking forward to the next year,” Buchanan said. “Our conferences are only going to get bigger and better. Attendance this year is great, the rockstar theme is a lot of fun and our speakers and topics were huge draws.”

The speaker line-up included Life University President Dr. Guy Riekeman, Dr. Dan Murphy, Dr. Ted Carrick, Dr. Lorraine Gravante, Dr. Tim Maggs, Dr. Mary Watkins, Dr. Ty Talcott, Marge Roberts, M.S. and Aubrey Villines, J.D.

Non-CE speakers included EMMY®-award winner





We'll see
you at the
2017 FALL
Conference!

and media trainer Dr. Shawne Duperon, Ph.D., Integrity Doctors speaker Ryan Maule, Stuart Oberman, Esq., Ryan Buchanan, CFP, Jody Foster, CFP, Chloe Moore, CFP, and a panel of chiropractors and other health care professionals for the Thursday evening roundtable discussion.

Chiropractic assistants also had an all-star line-up, featuring Dr. Mark Cotney, Laurie Simpson, C.C.A., C.C.C.P.C. and Kevin Lewis, R.T.

"I'm already looking forward to next year," a conference attendee wrote via survey following the event. "The topics were worthwhile and timely, the Welcome Reception was an absolute blast with karaoke."

The Fall Conference is also the time of year that GCA leadership takes a moment to recognize the hard work and value our member chiropractors bring to the association and the entire chiropractic profession. Receiving Chiropractor of the Year Award for 2016 was Dr. Leana Kart.

"I am humbled to have been recognized by my peers in this way," Kart said. "I truly love this profession, and it's been my privilege to work with the Georgia Chiropractic Association toward the betterment of chiropractic in the state of Georgia."

Dr. Vincent Erario received the prestigious William H. Vaughn Humanitarian of the Year Award for his volunteer work at various civic and philanthropic organizations, along with continually demonstrating a consistent dedication and promotion to the welfare of chiropractic in Georgia and for the GCA. Erario currently works at Life University as the Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Research, and has also served GCA in many capacities over the years.

Also at the Fall Conference, Drs. Chris Connelly, Charles Weiss, Richard Buchanan and John Webster all received President's Awards from Davis.

"I'm very thankful to have spent time with Dr. Davis during his presidency, and am honored he presented me with a President's Award," Connelly said. "I also look forward to this coming year, serving as secretary for GCA."

Dr. Robert Hayden inducted Drs. Mark Cotney and Davis Kinney as fellows into the International College of Chiropractors (FICC).

Moving forward, the GCA Conference Committee is already deep into planning GCA's 2017 spring and fall conferences.

"For me, the best part of our GCA events is the camaraderie involve," Kart said. "We have great speakers and educational topics. We have different fun, engaging social events to connect chiropractors not only with other chiropractors but with our many sponsors and vendors. We're now offering non-CE classes that focus on practice building. The themes and costume parties are always a blast.

"But, at the end of the day, what it's about is pulling together hundreds of chiropractors from many different backgrounds and with different philosophies, and bringing us together in the same room," she continued. "We can meet, we can talk, we can get to know each other. It's not just about making connections; it's about actually connecting in a very meaningful way. And when we all decide to connect and engage, that's a very powerful thing for the chiropractic profession."



SAVE THE DATE!
 GCA's Annual Spring
 Conference, June
 9-11 at the Hilton
 DeSoto in Savannah,
 Ga. Visit gachiro.org
 for more information.



The Georgia Chiropractic
 Association is also very
 appreciative of our many
 vendors who helped make this
 show such a success! We can't
 do this without your support,
 and we look forward to seeing
 many returning faces in 2017.





Thanks again to our sponsors!

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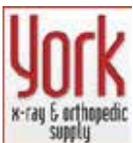
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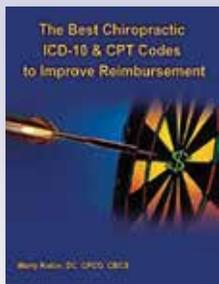
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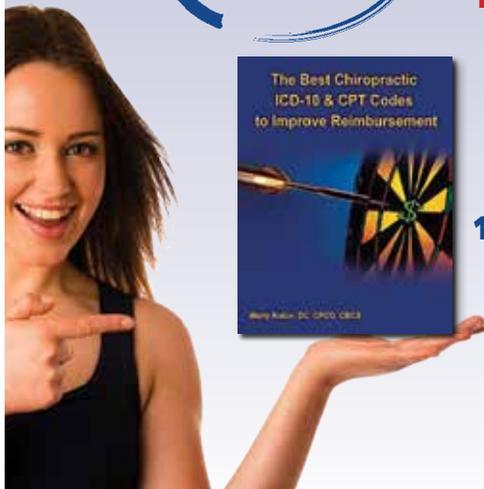
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2017 CHECKLIST: DO THESE THINGS for a Good Year!

By Laurie Simpson, C.C.A., C.C.C.P.C.



Laurie Simpson

Happy New Year! Hope you were able to get some rest over the holidays because now we dive into those tasks that have to be handled at the start of the year. To help you out, I've developed a handy checklist for you to use to make sure all of your bases are covered:

- Renew your license.** First and foremost, because 2016 was a license renewal year I assume everyone got that handled. If not, STOP reading this article and immediately go to sos.ga.gov and select the 'Licensing' tab at the top of the page.
- Get copies of those insurance cards.** A new year could mean new insurance for your patients. I highly recommend for every patient who enters your office for treatment, you ask for their insurance card. Even if a patient says they have the same insurance, there is always the possibility that the insurance identification number has changed (and possibly the group number). It is important to have a standard protocol in place which will allow for your billing department to stay up-to-date. This will help to eliminate having to refile claims later.
- Verify insurance benefits.** Yes, you should check benefits on everyone, even if the coverage doesn't appear to have changed. After all in 2016, we saw all Blue Cross Blue Shield Federal Employee Programs' co-pays increase by \$5, and nobody's identification numbers were changed. What I suggest is for any whose coverages can be checked online, you pre-verify prior to the visit to see if the same information is active coverage. Be aware, sometimes in doing this process the insurance will link an old policy with a new one. This may present a new identification number which means you need to be looking out for that possibility.
- Have patients sign a Notice of Assignment of Benefits.** This is especially important for any new insurance policy. Again, even if the patient has the exact same payer but the policy has changed (ie. new ID number) then a new notice would need to be signed.
- General compliance and fraud, waste and abuse training.** Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requires training to be done within 90 days of hire/contracting. This training is good for one calendar year and needs to be completed annually. CMS has a training module or you can also find the trainings via the United Healthcare or American Specialty Health Network websites (to name a few).
- Set your office goals.** The new year means new possibilities. What is your vision for your office? What do you wish to achieve in 2017? By setting SMART goals – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely – you have made your first step towards making your goal/vision a reality.

In closing, I'd like to encourage everyone to stay informed. New changes will be inevitable in a new year! If you don't take the time to pay attention, you may just miss something that will cost you in the end.



BARNETT BUILDS THRIVING

Referral Network

By Carly Sharec

W

When it comes to bridging relations between chiropractors and other health care professionals, few can touch on the work done by Dr. Steven Barnett since he began his chiropractic referral network in 2009.

“I had practiced for 30 years and had a great run,” the 1979 Palmer College graduate said. “I loved doing what I did and looked forward to going to work every day. But injuries to my hand and wrist forced me into retirement. And three weeks after I retired, I got a call from DeKalb Medical Center, inviting me to lunch.”

During that lunch, DeKalb Medical representatives told Barnett how he was one of their best referral sources.

“They said the experience they had opened their eyes to the tremendous potential there was in working constructively with the chiropractic community,” Barnett said. “So I realized very quickly I had to build a network.”

Hired by DeKalb Medical as director of chiropractic relations, Barnett began growing his referral network. It now includes more than 6,000 on its roster.

“DeKalb Medical just may be the only place in the country that does what we do,” he said. “When you go into an emergency room, you get a sheet of exit information. Today, if you go into the emergency room following a car wreck, for example, you’ll receive exit information that says to contact a

medical doctor or a chiropractor if you continue having back or neck pain.

“DeKalb Medical is the largest independent hospital in that metro Atlanta area,” Barnett continued. “And it has the word ‘chiropractor’ clearly printed on its exit form. That’s incredible.”

Since his retirement, Barnett has made it his mission to continue creating relationships between chiropractors and other health care professionals. He also spends time educating chiropractors on how to best present themselves to others, including medical doctors.

“It all comes down to relationships, referrals and reimbursements,” Barnett said. “Every relationship starts with a first date. If you have a bad first date, you don’t get a second one. Once you show medical doctors that you can help their patients become well, then you can tell them about other things you do as a chiropractor. But you can’t start at square three; you have to start at square one. And you don’t have to sell chiropractic.

“Really, what it comes down to is understanding their language,” he added.

Any chiropractor with more interest in Barnett’s referral network can contact him at 770-355-2997.

As for Barnett, he is constantly fixated on the future.

“I just want to leave this world a much better place for chiropractic than when I came into it,” he said. “As far as I’m concerned, chiropractors have never been in a better place to grow their practice through medical referrals. They just have to know the language, and that communication is in the ear of the listener.”

Dr. Steven Barnett, center, receives his Chiropractor of the Year award for 2014, flanked by GCA past presidents Dr. Douglas Giles, left, and Dr. Charles Weiss.



to Chiropractic Destiny

By Carly Sharec

W

When she started college, Charmi Patel had a very different vision of what her future career plans would look like.

“I wanted to become an orthodontist,” Patel explained. “I was applying to dental school. That was my plan, but then it changed after what happened to my dad.”

Nearly two years ago, her father suffered a massive stroke that put him in a coma for weeks and left his family doubtful of his survival. When he woke up, he was paralyzed and in need of much therapy. After a couple of months, they discovered chiropractic, and he has improved immensely since being under the care of a chiropractor.

“So that incident changed my plans,” she said. “I looked up chiropractic schools and went on a tour of Life University, and just fell in love with it.”

Patel jumped into student life and became involved with the Georgia Chiropractic Association as a GCA scholarship recipient. She is now an active member of the Georgia Club on Life’s campus, and has become a familiar face at GCA events, including the recent

Fall Conference & Trade Show, Oct. 21-23 in Atlanta.

“I had never experienced anything like that,” she said. “I’ve never been around so many doctors in the field I want to go in. It was very motivational. I got to meet so many chiropractors, and listening to Dr. Guy Riekeman talk was very inspirational. He is a very motivational speaker. It made me feel like one person can really make a remarkable difference in this world.”

Patel was also inspired by the inaugural Ladies’ Tea held at the October conference, hosted by Dr. Mary Watkins, saying she was honored to meet so many inspirational and strong women in the field of chiropractic.

She has a few more years of student life, but her plan is to continue working in Dr. Leana Kart’s Atlanta office for a couple of years after she graduates and then ultimately open a practice of her own.

“I know I want to work in this area of the state,” she said. “I want to stay in Georgia. But I’m open to whatever and wherever life takes me.”

When not in school or working, Patel enjoys attending church, volunteering, playing tennis and reading.

“Winning the GCA scholarship opened doors for me,” she said. “It helped me meet Dr. Kart and other inspirational, powerful chiropractors. It’s been a great experience, and I appreciate all of the effort GCA chiropractors have gone to in making me feel welcome and supported.”



Charmi Patel, right, in 2016 after accepting her GCA scholarship award.

"A significant concern is that the hemispheric sclerosis can mimic blastic metastasis or infection."

HEMISPHERIC SPONDYLOSCLEROSIS ASSOCIATED WITH

Degenerative Joint Disease

By J.C. Carter, D.C., D.A.C.B.R.



Dr. Carter is a GCA member. He maintains a busy film reading practice at 4480-H S Cobb Dr. #325, Smyrna, GA 30080 and is a full time faculty member at Life University. If you have **questions regarding his film reading service** please call 678-424-8588 or email at jccarterdc@gmail.com.

Degenerative Joint Disease involving the spine is one of the most common X-ray findings on spinal radiographs. Radiographic findings include disc narrowing, vacuum phenomenon, disc calcification, osteophytes and end-plate sclerosis. These findings can be seen in any combination.

An infrequent but often alarming presentation of end-plate sclerosis is hemispheric spondylosclerosis. Hemispheric spondylosclerosis is seen as prolific end-plate sclerosis on one or both sides of the disc space typically with a hemispherical contour. The key radiographic signs of DJD will be seen as previously described.

A significant concern is that the

hemispheric sclerosis can mimic blastic metastasis or infection. The contour of the sclerosis, the proximity to the end-plate and the disc narrowing should assist in the diagnosis. However, when the X-ray is not definitive and no prior films are available for review, MRI is definitive. Because hemispheric spondylosclerosis involves converting the marrow filled trabecular bone next to the end-plate into cortical bone, the sclerotic area seen on X-ray will be low signal on any MR sequence whereas both metastasis and infection will cause increased signal on water weighted sequences.



(Figure 1). The lateral lumbar demonstrates exuberant sclerosis on both sides of the L4/L5 disc.



YOU'VE GOT THE PATIENTS – NOW

Keep Them Coming Back!

By Carly Sharec

You've commissioned a professional website, your C.A. keeps your business Facebook page continually updated, you've joined the local Rotary Club to make community connections ... and now the business is beginning to roll in. What's next?

You might answer “provide quality care to improve my patient's quality of life,” which is absolutely correct. But even the best chiropractor with the best marketing can lose patients if his or her patient interaction isn't up to par.

There are some basic communication skills to employ so patients will want to continue coming back.

- **Introduce yourself.** Seems pretty basic, right? Not so much! In a study published by the *Journal of Hospital Medicine*, it was found hospital interns introduced themselves only 40 percent of the time, while only explaining their role 37 percent of the time. While not in a hospital setting, building up some kind of rapport with your patient, especially on a first visit, is important in developing that relationship. (And yes, this also applies to C.A.s and other office staff!)
- **Focus on the patient and listen intently.** Having a busy, thriving practice is a good thing, but it can also be very stressful for a chiropractor. With multiple patients waiting to be seen along with the normal pressures and demands of running a business, it's understandable to feel rushed from time to time. The key is to make sure your patients don't see that

struggle. Take the time to not just ask standard questions, but to really listen to the patient's answers. Need to practice on being a better listener? Focus on making eye contact – this will help keep your mind engaged in the conversation, and will let your patient know that your focus is on them.

- **Validate patient concerns.** Right along with listening is offering validation for a patient when they are describing their symptoms – even if they're wrong. A person in pain just wants to feel heard (which is especially important for chiropractors, as some patients will visit a chiropractor after multiple trips to other health care professionals). While you might *know* the patient's right shoulder is the problem while they are complaining about their left shoulder (for example!), it never hurts to take that extra moment to consider all possibilities and to make the patient feel like you are truly listening to their concern.

This might all seem like “Conversation 101,” but it can be very easy for a chiropractor at any stage in her or his career to slip into comfortable habits that might not necessarily keep the patient first. Once you get the patient in the doors with your stellar marketing, make sure you keep them coming back with not only your top-notch skills but your sparkling personality!

Sources: dynamicchiropractic.com, hospitalcareers.com, futura.org

need advice? Do you need advice about starting a new practice? Submit questions to csharec@gachiro.org, and your answer may appear in the next edition.



THE

New Deal

By Linda Denham Gilreath, D.C.

It is a new year and a new beginning. Many people make deals with themselves to improve in various areas. I made a deal, dare I say resolution, to become more physically fit. It started going downhill rapidly the day I figured out that I was not middle aged. It was a startling revelation. When I did the math I had to admit that no one lives to be 136. The next thing I had to admit was there were things that just were not going to happen in my life. For instance, I was never going to become a professional ice skater. Heck, I was never going to become an ice skater of any kind. My daughter's friends were astonished when I would state "I can do that" during an Olympic ice skating performance. Their admiration was short-lived when, without missing a beat, my daughter flatly stated, "No she can't."

Fast forward, to watching my 7-year-old granddaughter's dance performance that motivated me to get fit. I was beginning to get that gleam in my eye when I looked up the Danzia I-Flex stretch unit. Amazon Prime priced it at \$41.29, a small price to pay for being able to get your leg over your head. There were only three left in stock when my grandson looked over my shoulder and said "Getting it down could prove to be a disaster."

The Internet is full of information to reboot your image, some of it useful. The no. 1 thing you are too old to wear on "The 20 Trends You Are Too Old to Wear" is bedazzled jeans. Not to fear, those spangles will never see my rear end.

No. 3 on that list was excessive cleavage after 50. That ship never sailed.

Moving right along to review no. 4 on the list - sky high stripper heels, knee high gladiator sandals or thigh high boots. I have never been able to keep up with fashion trends in shoes due to my painfully narrow foot. I was emotionally scarred by having to wear brown and white saddle oxfords when the entire world had on the smart black and white models. Once, I succumbed to the allure of the platform shoe only to be humiliated when I splattered on the sidewalk as I attempted to walk. My legs were too skinny for boots until I was 45. Prior to that, the look I had going on was similar to a stick stuck in a bucket, not particularly attrac-

tive. Now that my legs are bigger, I am too old.

Who needs to be reminded that after 30 you are too old for boastful graphic T shirts? For starters, the manufacturers of Foxy Ladies' Shirts need to rethink the manufacturing anything over a size 3. We have all seen the Foxy Ladies shirt come in our office. My first thought, "Who told you that?"

So I am leaving the fashion trends behind me. I am sticking to walking up mountains (big hills really), and doing reasonable exercises. I have some DVDs coming in the mail. I love Amazon Prime.

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