



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Letter from the Editor

By Mary van der Heijde



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As we're heading into the end of 2011, it's useful to stop and take stock of the remarkable changes, challenges and opportunities health actuaries have experienced this year. Regulatory changes that are relegated to the fine print this year would have been major news in a normal year. In this issue, we have included information about specific programs like accountable care organizations (ACOs), as well as focused on the ways the Society of Actuaries (SOA) and the American Academy of Actuaries (AAA) (and their members) have remained active in health care reform discussions.

In June 2011, the Health Section hosted the SOA health meeting, which despite our tough budgetary times had record attendance. Doug Norris has recapped for us some of the highlights of the conference. While at the conference, we were fortunate to be able to sit down one-on-one with both of the keynote presenters, Rick Foster and Susan Dentzer. Susan Dentzer, the editor-in-chief of *Health Affairs*, met with us for an interview and shared her thoughts about where health care and health policy are going for the next year, and how she sees actuaries best having an integral role within the context of health reform. Rick Foster is the chief actuary at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and gave us an open and engaging interview that I encourage you to read. Rick received a standing ovation at the end of his keynote address, which is representative of both his excellent presentation and the significant and meaningful contributions he has made to our profession and to the current health care reform debate.

This issue's "Chairperson's Corner" shares information about the joint meeting with the Academy of Actuaries' Health Practice Council, the 2011 accomplishments within the context of untapped opportunities for actuaries, and the latest on the Health Actuarial

Research Initiative (HARI). In "Soundbites from the Academy," Heather Jerbi and Tim Mahony share more information about the ongoing activity related to health care reform. Specifically, they discuss activity related to ACOs, risk-sharing mechanisms, actuarial value and several other current topics.

In 2010, the Health Section sponsored a two-phase research effort focused on disability income insurance. Steve Siegel has summarized for us key conclusions from the first phase of that completed research.

As an extension of the article in the January 2011 issue of *Health Watch*, Bob Cosway and Barbara Abbott have analyzed recent premium and benefit trends for large public sector plans renewing July 1, 2011. Bob Tate's article provides helpful background about ACOs, why actuaries should care, and why it's important that we get and stay involved in ACO evolution. Timothy Adams delves into Medicare Part D LICS and reinsurance provisions, and if they really are "risk free."

We hope you find this information interesting and useful, and welcome you to contact us with your thoughts and opinions. ■

