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# Up Front with the SOA Staff Fellow

By Joe Wurzburger

The release of this issue of *Health Watch* roughly coincides with the end of my first year as the Society of Actuaries' (SOA's) Health staff fellow, and what a year it has been. On both a personal and professional level, it has been a year marked by seemingly nonstop change. While it would seem difficult to top my personal change trifecta of a new job, new house and new baby girl, the health care industry may have in fact pulled it off over these past 12 months.

Between the *King v. Burwell Supreme Court* case, potential industry consolidation, announcements related to 3Rs programs, etc., one would be hard-pressed to find a more dynamic industry. And I'm proud to say that the Health Section, tasked with providing continuing education in this ever-changing landscape (among its many responsibilities), was up to the challenge. From its robust offering of sessions at the Health Meeting to its comprehensive syllabus at Health Boot Camps; from its myriad webcast and podcast offerings to the remarkable issue of *The ACA@5: An Actuarial Retrospective*, the Health Section has lived up to—and even exceeded—its usual lofty standards.

The increasing significance of the health care industry—and the Health Section's role in it—was on full display at the 2015 Valuation Actuary (Val Act) Symposium in Boston. Historically the content at this meeting has been dominated by life insurance topics, but this is no longer the case. Not only were there plenty of health topics in general, but there was actually an Affordable Care Act (ACA) “track” of sessions; a few that I attended include:

- Reserving for and Opining on Risk Adjustment Transfer Payments
- A Look Back at 2014 Health Opinions and Lessons Learned
- Premium Deficiency Reserves for Health Products

Perhaps most telling in terms of the rising status of health topics at Val Act was the keynote speaker: Nathan Wolfe, known widely as the “Virus Hunter.” The fact that he was an engaging speaker was no surprise—anyone who has seen one of his TED Talks or has seen him on *The Colbert Report* anticipated that. What impressed me was that the keynote speaker for this event is world-renowned for his work with epidemic diseases, i.e., a *health* topic. Yes, friends, health care is in fact fascinating



to talk about, and not just for those of us who consider ourselves health actuaries.

In the year ahead, I would anticipate this fast pace to continue. With a presidential election, rate volatility, the continuing drama of potential mergers and acquisitions, new specialty drugs, etc., there's no letup in sight. It promises to continue to be a wild adventure. Let's enjoy the ride. ■



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