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Up Front With the SOA Staff Fellow

By Joe Wurzburger

I write this article in late March, on the date the U.S. House of Representatives intends to vote on the American Health Care Act. (*Editor's note: Which is at least four days after he should have been writing this, but who's counting?*) I have a web browser open with *The New York Times*' running tally of anticipated "no" votes, and as has been the case so often lately in the health care world, the future is very much unknown.

As you read this, you already know how this particular vote turned out. Regardless of the outcome, I'm sure there have been other twists and turns that have maintained the heavy burden on you as health actuaries to stay current with regulations and expectations that shape your professional lives.

It is with this in mind that I want to make sure you are aware of what might be the best-kept secret in continuing education for health actuaries: the Society of Actuaries (SOA) Boot Camps. These boot camps have existed in one form or another for more than a decade, but never have they been more relevant than they are in today's dynamic health care environment.

THE BASICS

First, so we don't bury the lead too far, here are the essential details. The 2017 Health Boot Camps will take place on Nov. 6 and 7 in New Orleans. Three concurrent boot camps will be available as options:

- Advanced Commercial Pricing
- Medicare Advantage: Part C and Some Part D Pricing
- Provider Risk Sharing

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Each course runs for two full days, allowing for in-depth learning that just isn't possible in most other settings. Additionally, a working lunch on Day 2 will cover professionalism topics, enabling all attendees to earn continuing education credits for professionalism along with those they earn in their chosen primary topic. Find more details at the SOA events calendar.¹

Now let's answer some of your important questions.

WHAT MAKES THE SOA HEALTH BOOT CAMPS SO GREAT?

Let's start with the format that makes these boot camps so distinctive. Each topic is covered over the course of two full days. This allows for a depth of learning that simply can't be replicated in the 90-minute sessions you may experience at other continuing education events. Instructors may utilize pre-work, hands-on case studies and other immersive teaching techniques in order to maximize learning.

Additionally, attendees are able to interact individually with our highly regarded faculty as well as other attendees to build meaningful relationships. Networking is further encouraged during meals and at the evening reception.

WHY ARE THE SOA HEALTH BOOT CAMPS ESPECIALLY RELEVANT THIS YEAR?

Preparing roughly 16 hours of syllabus material is challenging enough under normal conditions. This year, with the nearly

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constant changes coming out of Washington, DC, the challenge is especially intense. Our top-notch faculty is more than up for the challenge, though. And this means that you are able to receive in-depth training on the topic of your choosing that includes the latest news and developments. Instead of feeling as if you're trying to find what to read—and find the time to read it—just to keep your head above water, you can go back to your respective offices after two days and feel like experts.

COULD YOU TELL ME MORE ABOUT THE TOPICS COVERED?

Gladly! The Advanced Commercial Pricing Boot Camp will return for its fourth edition. The reviews for the first three versions of this boot camp have been stellar, and this year's edition is sure to impress. This fast-paced seminar will tackle nearly everything you can imagine related to pricing health insurance products, particularly in the individual and small group markets. Changes are coming fast and furious for health actuaries in this arena, and this boot camp will feature timely information including all of the latest changes, whether we are talking about the Affordable Care Act, the American Health Care Act or something else entirely.

The Medicare Advantage Boot Camp has been around for close to a decade, and it has developed quite a reputation as a premier source of Medicare Advantage education. This boot camp makes effective use of pre-work, and attendees will get hands-on experience with the Bid Pricing Tool (BPT). Medicare Advantage evolves annually. New rules are announced each year and product changes occur. These new developments do not typically lessen the actuaries' workload or otherwise make things easier during the limited time of the bid season. Presenters will cover recent changes in the bid instructions and other regulations that affect BPT development. By updating the curriculum to reflect recent changes, instructors ensure that this a valuable learning experience even for those who have attended in prior years.

The newest addition to the boot camp slate is the Provider Risk Sharing Boot Camp, and we are so excited to bring you such a high-quality session on what is a truly hot topic. Changes introduced by various Medicare Alternative Payment Models and the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) have accelerated an existing market trend of shifting some of what has traditionally been considered "insurance risk" to providers. The Provider Risk Sharing Boot Camp will give attendees deeper insights into methods, current thinking and alternative solutions that actuaries can use to help providers understand and manage the financial and actuarial risks that they are taking, many for the first time. Instructors will utilize case studies and interactive exercises to make for an immersive and thorough learning experience for attendees.

ISN'T NEW ORLEANS A REALLY FUN PLACE TO VISIT?

Why, yes. Yes it is.

SO WHY HAVEN'T I REGISTERED YET?

Good question. Go to SOA.org to remedy that situation now. And of course please spread the word to your colleagues and other actuarial friends.

I'll see you in The Big Easy. ■



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ENDNOTE

1 www.soa.org/calendar