



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Profession-wide issues drive health leaders' activities

by Howard J. Bolnick

Practice area committees chaired by SOA vice presidents were established in October 1992. When I chaired my first Health Benefit Systems Practice Advancement Committee (HBSPAC) meeting in October 1994, the committee agreed to refine the initial organization that Sam Gutterman, first HBSPAC chair and current SOA president, created. Another challenge was to shape our role as it relates to other SOA committees and professional actuarial organizations.

Health actuaries are involved in a broad range of meetings and activities that compete for the most precious resource we have: the time and interest of our members. Activities include those of the Health Practice Council (HPC) of the American Academy of Actuaries, the SOA Health Section Council (HSC), SOA functional committees, and sister organizations such as the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, Conference of Consulting Actuaries, and the Casualty Actuarial Society.

The HBSPAC is composed of SOA Board members in the health practice area, committee chairs, HPC and HSC leadership and other recognized health leaders. Its goal is to bring the profession's health actuarial leadership together, regardless of organizational representation.

During the 1994-95 planning meetings, we first discussed how to best serve members while avoiding intra- and inter-organizational conflicts and duplication of efforts. We then developed a profession-wide agenda of key issues to drive activities throughout the maze of actuarial committees and organizations.

1995 internal changes

Activities in 1995 resulted in several important internal changes:

- The HBSPAC and the HSC agreed

to closely coordinate their activities. The HSC chair (currently Jean Wodarczyk) has become the HBSPAC vice chair. Members of the HSC have all joined HBSPAC committees, with the expectation that they will become involved in leadership roles. Closer coordination allows us to combine the grassroots legitimacy of the HSC, members of which are elected by health actuaries, with the top-level leadership role given to the HBSPAC by the SOA Board. This puts us in a better position to do the things our members want and need.

- The HBSPAC and the HPC have continued to coordinate activities. In 1994, we formed a Joint SOA/Academy Communications Task Force to inform members about our profession's activities in Washington and various states on health care reform legislation. This Task Force proved so valuable that its activities have been expanded, and it has become a permanent committee. In 1995, we formed a Joint Financial Issues Committee to integrate the respective roles of the SOA and Academy on financial issues.
- The HBSPAC and HSC agreed to jointly identify key issues for the next few years. Joint planning groups will prepare action plans on eight topics: 1) managed care effectiveness, 2) Medicare, 3) Medicaid, 4) universal coverage and access to coverage, 5) financial issues, 6) disability income, 7) long-term care, and 8) Canadian issues. These issue-oriented plans will emphasize bringing non-actuarial health policy scholars into our work processes.

Pushing the envelope in 1996

During 1996, the HBSPAC will change its emphasis from internal organizational changes to implementing

issue-oriented plans. It intends to push the envelope of actuaries' involvement in health issues. Its expectations in 1996 include:

- More relevant health sessions at SOA meetings, as a result of HSC volunteers who plan and recruit sessions having closer contact with leadership who can help identify emerging issues and interesting participants from outside the profession
- Release of well-received research on risk adjusters, followed with a symposium for actuaries, academic researchers, and health policymakers to discuss implications of findings
- Commitments to one or two research symposia, sponsored jointly by the SOA and highly regarded academic institutions
- More communication to members with emphasis on using Actuaries Online and the Internet
- Continuing to work with NAIC on health matters such as HORBC and LTC valuation tables
- Continued Academy HPC involvement with state legislators and Congress as health care reform issues are debated

Member interest and involvement are major strengths of our profession. A full list of accomplishments for the past year of all groups and of expectations for the next is too long to cover in detail. We greatly appreciate your involvement and hope that our assistance enhances the effectiveness of your professional efforts.

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