

REPORT OF COUNCIL ON LONG RANGE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The following report was presented by Robert M. Wah, MD, Chair:

1. BYLAWS CHANGE TO EXPAND CRITERIA FOR AMA-YPS MEMBERSHIP (RESOLUTION 1, A-04)

HOUSE ACTION: RECOMMENDATION ADOPTED AND REMAINDER OF REPORT FILED

At the 2004 Annual Meeting, the House of Delegates referred Resolution 1, entitled “Bylaws Change to Expand Criteria for AMA-YPS Membership” to the AMA Board of Trustees. Resolution 1 asks “that our American Medical Association amend its Bylaws to change the practice component in AMA Young Physicians Section membership criteria from five years to eight years.” The Young Physicians Section introduced the resolution.

The current AMA Bylaws Section 7.51 states:

All active physician members of the American Medical Association who are not resident/fellow physicians serving in an approved training program, but who are under 40 years of age or are within the first five (5) years of professional practice after residency and fellowship training programs, shall be members of the Young Physicians Section.

BACKGROUND

The AMA-YPS was formed in 1986 to:

- identify the unique concerns of young physicians;
- give young physicians a voice in the AMA’s policymaking process;
- train emerging leaders;
- provide a leadership pathway for physicians to gain AMA experience;
- increase the number of young physician members of the AMA; and
- enhance the value of AMA membership for young physicians.

The leadership training component of the YPS has always been seen as a particularly valuable aspect of the section. Skills developed in the section are valuable and transferable to future AMA positions, other Federation entities, local hospitals, and a physician’s community. Thus, YPS training helps younger physicians assimilate into leadership positions throughout medicine.

The Young Physicians Section has considered the issue of parity between age and years in practice many times over the last ten years. At the root of the issue is the concern that physicians who enter practice at a later age, whose specialty entails lengthy residencies or fellowships, are disadvantaged by the “five year” rule. One of the concerns is that YPS members who are older when they enter the section have an abbreviated period of time in the Assembly, which makes it more difficult to acquire enough YPS experience to achieve elected leadership positions. The YPS Governing Council recommended “maintaining the age of 40, but expanding the years in practice component from five to eight years, to make the length of service in the AMA-YPS more equitable for all physicians regardless of specialty.” According to the YPS Governing Council, this recommendation would have minimal impact on the section identity and would not measurably impact its size or composition.

DISCUSSION

The CLRPD met with the Chair of the YPS to discuss Resolution 1. The Council was provided a brief history of this proposal and informed that Resolution 1 was strongly supported by the section. The Council was assured that this change would not impact the section’s identity. Since its inception, the AMA-YPS has included a diverse group of participants including those new to practice, those with longer times in practice but who are still under age 40, and physicians close to 40 (or older) who participate under the five-year rule. The AMA-YPS also has always included a mix of those new to the AMA, physicians new to organized medicine, those with AMA experience from the Medical Student and/or Resident and Fellow Section, and former Medical Student Section or Resident and Fellow Section Governing Council members or Trustees.

The CLRPD also received input from two specialty societies. An alternative proposal was recommended that sought to eliminate the YPS age criteria and base membership in the section on the first 10 years of professional practice. While this proposal also addresses the parity issue, the Council did not favor this approach. First, the CLRPD felt it might shift the focus of the section, ultimately changing its identity. The CLRPD also understands that there are database issues that would make the credentialing process more cumbersome and labor intensive.

The Council was persuaded that keeping the age 40 component and expanding the age in practice component from five to eight years would enable the YPS to be more inclusive and make more uniform the number of years of eligibility for AMA-YPS participation. In sum, the YPS proposal is a fair and equitable approach. The CLRPD felt that the YPS proposal would:

- Increase participation opportunities for those over age 40, but in their early years of practice who now feel disenfranchised from the Assembly in terms of length of Assembly service and ability to run for Governing Council positions;
- Enable more participants from societies such as the American College of Surgeons, which allows participation by physicians 45 years and under;
- Allow more participation from “later career” physicians from those specialty societies that define membership in terms of years in practice;
- Allow continued focus on the unique concerns of the younger physician population; and
- Not inhibit mainstreaming by young physicians who are able to do so.

Therefore, the CLRPD supports adoption of Resolution 1 (A-04).

RECOMMENDATION

The Council on Long Range Planning and Development recommends that the House of Delegates adopt Resolution 1 (A-04) and that the remainder of this report be filed.