Iowa Medicaid Coverage

This past month, the Iowa Legislature had advised to drop coverage for bariatric surgery through the Iowa Medicaid program as a cost-cutting measure. ASMBS leadership including Drs. Robin Blackstone, Jaime Ponce, and John Morton and Iowa bariatric surgeons including the father of bariatric surgery Dr. Ed Mason vigorously responded in opposition via the attached letter. The ASMBS Rapid Response Team led by myself and Joe Nadglowski from the Obesity Action Coalition was able to provide strong evidence to support bariatric surgery’s safety and efficacy and provide grassroots support. Dr. Debbie Winegar from Surgery Review Corporation queried the BOLD database to find that Iowa Bariatric Surgery has an excellent patient safety profile.

We are happy to report that this measure was REVERSED by Iowa! While this proposal by Iowa Medicaid did not come to pass, the original proposal underscores the need to remain ever vigilant in defense of bariatric surgery coverage. The Access to Care Committee will continue to assert the vital need for bariatric surgery in treating the nation’s leading public health challenge in Iowa and beyond including placing bariatric surgery on the uniform benefits plan for the upcoming health exchanges.

It was a team effort to reverse this policy to cut bariatric surgery and many thanks to Jennifer Wynn, Georgeann Mallory and Drs. Teresa LaMasters, Mohammad Khalid Jamal, Isaac Samuel, Matthew Christophersen and Michael Allen Phelps.

John Morton, M.D.

Chair, ASMBS Access To Care Committee