

Cooper, P: Behind the Scenes at the ASA Closed Claims Project. *ASA Newsletter* 63(6):10-11, 1999.

Full Text

The ASA Closed Claims Project is conducted by the ASA Committee on Professional Liability. The project office is located at the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. It was started in 1984 by Richard J. Ward, M.D., and is currently directed by Frederick W. Cheney, M.D., with the assistance of Robert A. Caplan, M.D., Karen B. Domino, M.D., and Karen L. Posner, Ph.D. Other staff include Pauline Cooper, B.A., (research study coordinator), John Campos, M.A., (computer support analyst) and Lynn Hubbard-Hamacher (secretary). The Closed Claims database currently consists of 4,459 claims. On average, about 300 cases are collected per year.

Companies Involved

Thirty-five insurance companies across the United States currently participate in the project. They have agreed to allow anesthesiology reviewers to review their anesthesiology-related claims that have closed.

Reviewers Involved

Reviewing is performed on a voluntary basis, and reviewers are only reimbursed for travel expenses. All reviewers are members of ASA and are in active practice. At present, approximately 15 anesthesiologists are called upon each year to conduct reviews. The Closed Claims Project extends its special thanks to reviewers who have surveyed 100 or more claims. These individuals include: Patrick K. Birmingham, M.D., Bruce R. Brookens, M.D., David E. Byer, M.D., Michael G. Cassaro, M.D., Frederick W. Cheney, M.D., William Gild, M.D., Anthony R. Giorgio, M.D., Sandra Jelenich, M.D., Russell T. Wall III, M.D., Richard J. Ward, M.D., Gary W. Welch, M.D., and Gerald L. Zeitlin, M.D.

ASA Closed Claims Process

The Closed Claims office first contacts a participating insurance company to find out how many anesthesia claims have closed since our previous visit to that company. Each participating insurance company is contacted once each year. If there are enough claims to warrant a visit, we then search for volunteer physician reviewers from similar geographic locations to evaluate information at that company. Reviewers travelling to destinations requiring overnight stays are asked to participate for two to three days at a time. All materials that the reviewers need (e.g., dataforms, instructions) are mailed in advance to the company. At the conclusion of the reviewers' visit, the company returns the completed dataforms to the Closed Claims office via express mail, where the dataforms are then given a unique identification number. All identifiers are removed from the dataform to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the company and the other parties involved in the claim. Finally, the ASA Closed Claims committee reviews the dataforms for consistency and missing information. Each January, claims from company visits that have undergone the complete review process are incorporated into the overall database for analysis.

Company and Reviewer Acknowledgments

Of the 35 companies that have contributed to the Closed Claims Project database, the following 25 organizations have given permission for acknowledgements as a source of closed claims: Anesthesia Services Medical Group, Inc., California; Anesthesiologists Professional Assurance Trust, Florida; Armed Forces Institute of Pathology; Controlled Risk Insurance Company (Harvard); COPIC Insurance Company, Colorado; Doctors' Company of Southern California; Illinois State Medical Inter-Insurance Exchange; Massachusetts Medical Professional Insurance Association; Medical Association of Georgia Mutual Insurance Company; Medical Inter-Insurance Exchange of New Jersey; Medical Liability Mutual Insurance Company of New York; Medical Mutual Insurance Company of Maine; Midwest Medical Insurance Company; Mutual Insurance Company of Arizona; National Capital Reciprocal Insurance Company; NORCAL Mutual Insurance Company, California; Pennsylvania Medical Society Liability Insurance Company; PHICO Insurance Company, Ohio; Preferred Physicians Mutual Risk Retention Group; St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company; State Volunteer Mutual Insurance Company, Tennessee; University of Texas Medical System; Utah Medical Insurance Association; Veterans Administration; and Washington State Physicians Insurance Exchange Association.

The following 52 anesthesiologist reviewers have given permission for acknowledgement as claims reviewers in recent years: Bruce R. Baird, M.D., R. Dennis Bastron, M.D., Patrick K. Birmingham, M.D., James F. Black, M.D., John T. Bonner, M.D., Bruce R. Brookens, M.D., David E. Byer, M.D., Edgar D. Canada, M.D., Robert A. Caplan, M.D., Michael G. Cassaro, M.D., H.S. "Cliff" Chadwick, M.D., Frederick W. Cheney, M.D., Melvin A. Cohen, M.D., Shep Cohen, M.D., Michael F. Cristoforo, M.D., Fred G. Davis, M.D., Alberto J. DeArmeni, M.D., David M. Dewan, M.D., Karen B. Domino, M.D., Richard M. Dsida, M.D., John H. Eichhorn, M.D., Herbert M. Epstein, M.D., Herbert A. Ferrari, M.D., Jeremy M. Geiduschek, M.D., James S. Gessner, M.D., Anthony R. Giorgio, M.D., Ronald J. Gordon, M.D., Douglas S. Hagan, M.D., Henri S. Havdala, M.D., Peter L. Hendricks, M.D., William D. Hetrick, M.D., Richard N. Hindin, M.D., Rosemarie M. Johnson, M.D., Robert E. Kettler, M.D., Donald A. Kroll, M.D., Gary H. Morton, M.D., Rodney C. Osborn, M.D., Lee S. Perrin, M.D., William C. Petty, M.D., M. Ramez Salem, M.D., L. Anthony Simons, M.B., Stephen R. Strelec, M.D., Daniel R. Sullivan, M.D., Neil Swissman, M.D., Philip Villandry, M.D., Jordan Waldman, M.D., Russell T. Wall III, M.D., Edward S. Wegrzynowicz, M.D., Maxwell Weingarten, M.D., Gary W. Welch, M.D., Harry C. Wong, M.D., and Jay H. Yedlin, M.D.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of all participating companies and reviewers that have contributed to the Closed Claims Project.

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