

# IAP UPDATE

Iowa Association of Pathologists

February, 2014

## Pathologists dwell in ‘coding hell’

by Daniel Slagel, MD  
President, IAP

**H**ave you checked with your billing staff since January 1? In light of the new rules put into effect by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), there may be cause for concern.

Business decisions by pathologists must be balanced by ethical obligations of their profession and appropriate utilization of health care resources. Whether we are partners, contractors or employees, we must make sound business decisions to properly run a laboratory and provide appropriate patient care.

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***“I challenge anyone to make logical sense of the CMS rules.”***

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The complexity of assigning billing codes for immunohistochemical studies has increased exponentially since 2013 and seriously threatens this balance. I challenge anyone to make logical sense of the CMS rules.

Assigning immunohistochemical codes 88342, 88343, 88360, 88361—and now, G0461 and G0462—depends upon a dizzying array

of variables including patients’ insurance, inpatient or outpatient status, whether the source for reimbursement recognizes a per block or per specimen limit, whether the immunoperoxidase study was part of a cocktail, whether the same antibody was used on the same block at different levels or from the same specimen, and whether the interpretation was made with the assistance of computerized image analysis.

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### ***IAP Annual Dinner held in Iowa City***

The Iowa Association of Pathologists Annual Dinner was held last November in Iowa City. Pictured above is IAP President Daniel Slagel, MD, Dubuque and UI pathology resident Michelle Kurt-Mangold, MD. For more photos and information about this year’s Annual Dinner, see page 2.

***This newsletter is a benefit of your membership in the Iowa Association of Pathologists. Have you paid your dues for 2014? Check the member listing on [www.iapathologists.org](http://www.iapathologists.org)***

## 2014 IAP Annual Dinner set for Thursday, November 13

The 2014 IAP Annual Dinner has been scheduled for Thursday evening, November 13 at Glen Oaks Country Club in West Des Moines.

This successful event was launched four years ago and is open to any Iowa pathologist. The dinner includes a reception, exhibitors and a scientific presentation. Plans for this year's speaker are pending. Watch the IAP web site, [www.iapathologists.org](http://www.iapathologists.org), for additional details.\*

## IAP 2014 elections

Election of IAP officers and board members will take place at the 2014 IAP Annual Dinner November 13 at Glen Oaks Country Club.

IAP offices up for election this year are (incumbents are listed in parenthesis): President (Daniel Slagel, MD); Secretary-Treasurer (Jared Abbott, MD); Board member at large (Renee Ellerbroek, MD); Board member at large (Jamie Weydert, MD).

All offices carry two-year terms that will begin January 1, 2015.\*

## Iowa's Delegates to the CAP

Iowa's delegates to the College of American Pathologists will be chosen via electronic ballot this month.

Iowa is allowed three CAP delegates and three alternates. The slate of nominees includes: Clinton Crowder, MD; Joseph Eaton, MD; Christopher Leigh, MD; Jamie Weydert, MD and Dan Slagel, MD. All candidates are IAP members in good standing.\*

### Electronic registration available for this year's IAP Annual Dinner

Attendees at this year's IAP Annual Dinner will be able to register online through the IAP web site, [iapathologists.org](http://iapathologists.org). Registrants can pay using Pay Pal or a regular credit card.

Attendees who don't wish to register online will be able to download a registration form from the IAP web site and pay by check through regular mail.

Online membership registration will be launched in 2015, also through the IAP web site.

## 2013 Annual Dinner photos



From left, University of Iowa pathology residents Michael Gailey, DO; Joe Mitros, MD; Bryan Steussy, MD and Johanna Savage, MD.



Nancy Rosenthal, MD, University of Iowa Department of Pathology, visits with Dale Andres, DO, Pathology Associates of Central Iowa, Des Moines.



From left, Adam Bell, MD, Pathology Associates of Central Iowa in Des Moines, with Doug Lynch, MD and Sergei Syrbu, MD, University of Iowa.

**CAP '14 "The Pathologists' Meeting"**  
September 7-10 • Chicago, Illinois

## Coding Hell

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Our billers and coders (who typically have no formal pathology training) are expected to make these clinically-complex interpretations.

As laboratory directors, we are *legally* responsible for the billing practices of our laboratories. I suggest that these issues warrant your attention and concern, whether

cannot comment on other jurisdictions.” Apparently, they do not realize what they are requiring. On your last complex surgical case, do you know when the technical components of your individual immunos, flow, cytogenetics, FISH, etc. were completed? If you order successive rounds of immuno-histochemistry as you attempt to determine the origin of a metastatic

***“I doubt any agency could accurately audit a laboratory’s attempts to apply these Rube Goldberg rules, but our necks remain in their guillotine.”***

your practice does in-house billing or has outsourced this activity.

WPS Health Insurance, the Iowa intermediary for CMS, now asks us to separate the date of service for technical and professional services. In most instances, this will result in at least two separate claims instead of one. WPS insists this is not a policy change, and says CMS has consistently required that the proper date of service (DOS) for the professional component (PC) or any other service is “the date the service was performed.”

For providers whose services are not separable into technical and professional components, this may be true; but for pathology and radiology, this is clearly a change in practice. The Iowa WPS is one of seven Medicare administrative contractors, and is one of only two contractors who have chosen to interpret CMS instructions this way. When questioned about this inconsistent interpretation, the WPS representative said, “WPS Medicare

large cell neoplasm, should there be multiple dates of services for the TC? And was that one block, two blocks, a cocktail, specimen or computer interpretation, and did you include the appropriate PQRS?

Why are we expected to jump through a hoop which is complex, seemingly irrelevant and nearly impossible to track? No one really knows, including, in my opinion, WPS. This certainly explains their apparent reluctance to discuss it.

I am aware of no billing software that can handle this level of coding complexity and I doubt any agency could accurately audit a laboratory’s attempts to apply these Rube Goldberg rules, but our necks remain in their guillotine.

As you ponder the effect of these changes on your next case, you might also want to check on the mental health of your billing department. \*

*Dr. Slagel practices with Pathology Associates of Dubuque and United Clinical Laboratories. He has served as IAP President since January of 2013.*

### **Six groups achieve 100 percent IAP membership in 2013**

The Iowa Association of Pathologists Board of Directors thanks the following groups for achieving 100 percent IAP membership in 2013:

- Cross Medical Laboratories, Iowa City
- McFarland Clinic, Ames
- Pathology Associates of Central Iowa, Des Moines
- Pathology Associates, Dubuque
- Pathology Medical Services of Siouxland, Sioux City
- University of Iowa, Carver College of Medicine Department of Pathology, Iowa City

***We appreciate your support!***

### **IAP Officers and Board**

#### **President**

Daniel D. Slagel, MD, Dubuque

#### **Secretary Treasurer**

Jared J. Abbott, MD, Des Moines

#### **Past President**

Christopher J. Johnson, MD, Ames

#### **Board Members**

Dale F. Andres, DO, Des Moines  
 Renee R. Ellerbroek, MD, Des Moines  
 Steven P. Goetz, MD, Mason City  
 John J. VanRybroek, MD, Iowa City  
 Jamie Weydert, MD, Ames

#### **University of Iowa Representative**

Robert A. Robinson, MD, Iowa City

#### **Resident Members**

Michael Gailey, DO, Iowa City  
 Lori Sinclair MD, Iowa City

#### **Administrative Staff**

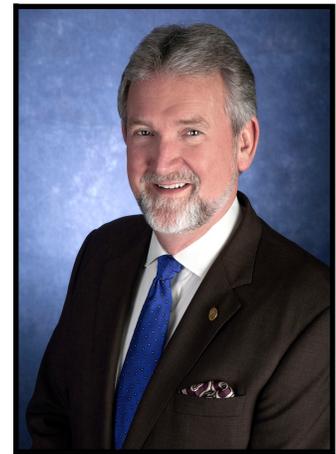
Cheri Jensen  
 Chris McMahon Sutton

## Dr. Herbek installed as CAP president

**A** longtime member of the Iowa Association of Pathologists is the new president of the College of American Pathologists. Gene Herbek, MD, was installed last October as the 33rd president of CAP.

Dr. Herbek has been actively involved in the CAP for more than 24 years and has served on the CAP Board of Governors, most recently as president-elect and secretary-treasurer. Currently, Dr. Herbek is medical director of the Methodist Women's Hospital laboratory and medical director of the Transfusion and Coagulation Services for the Pathology Center at Methodist Hospital, both in Omaha, Nebraska.

Among his many professional honors and awards, Dr. Herbek has received the CAP Outstanding Communicator Award and the St. Luke's Regional Medical Center, Sioux City, Iowa, Physician Hero Award. In 2012, the first Gene and Jean Herbek Humanitarian Award was presented to a CAP member pathologist.\*



Gene Herbek, MD, a member of the Iowa Association of Pathologists, is the new president of CAP.

## Dr. Nashelsky elected to national office

**M**arcs Nashelsky, MD is the new vice president of NAME, the National Association of Medical Examiners. He was elected during NAME's recent annual meeting, and took office January 1, 2014.

Dr. Nashelsky is a Clinical Professor of Pathology and directs the UI Hospitals and Clinics Autopsy Service; his clinical work is centered on forensic and general autopsy pathology. He is a Johnson County Deputy Medical Examiner and an Assistant State Medical Examiner for Iowa.

The National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) is the professional organization of physician medical examiners (most of whom are board certified forensic pathologists) and medicolegal death investigators.\*



## Award for Dr. Robinson

**R**obert Robinson, MD, PhD is the recipient of the "Frank A. Mitros Excellence in Teaching and Clinical Service Award". The award is presented annually to a clinical faculty member who provides outstanding performance in both the clinical and education missions of the Department. Dr. Robinson was nominated by his peers. The award was presented by Frank Mitros, MD at a recent faculty meeting. Dr. Mitros cited Dr. Robinson's contributions to the department, the medical school and the community. \*

## New UI faculty member

**D**anniele Gomes Holanda, MD is the newest faculty member at the University of Iowa Department of Pathology. Dr. Holanda is clinical professor of pathology and will focus on running the renal pathology service. A native of Brazil, Dr. Holanda did her residency at the University of Maryland and a renal pathology fellowship at Johns Hopkins University. \*



Frank Mitros, MD (left) with Robert Robinson, MD, PhD, University of Iowa Department of Pathology. Dr. Robinson is the recipient of the Frank A. Mitros Excellence in Teaching and Clinical Service Award.