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## **CMS Health Policy Scholars Program**

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## CMS Health Policy Scholars Program

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Richard G. Stefanacci, DO, MGH, MBA, CMD, a visiting scholar with the Thomas Jefferson University Office of Health Policy and Clinical Outcomes, has been selected to serve as a CMS (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services) Health Policy Scholar. CMS is the renamed Health Care Finance Administration (HCFA), which is a department of Health and Human Services. The CMS Health Policy Scholars Program was started two years ago to encourage and develop health care policy experts on Medicare issues. Dr. Stefanacci will build upon the work already being accomplished in the Office of Health Policy in advancing efficient and effective practices within the health care system.

CMS has moved to bring more physicians to the CMS staff and place them in key positions, and the Medicare Health Policy Scholars Program is aimed at building on that expertise. Scholars are expected to contribute important insights to work at CMS in health care policy and be able to take back an enhanced understanding of how CMS programs deliver high quality care to the millions of Medicare beneficiaries.

Prior to his leaving CMS, then Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer, Ruben J. King-Shaw, Jr., invited the key medical associations to partner with CMS in the program. Dr. Sean Tunis, Director of the Office of Clinical Standards and Quality, and Chief Medical Officer, is heading up the program for CMS.

As a chosen scholar, Dr. Stefanacci will spend a year between CMS's headquarters in Baltimore and its Philadelphia regional office. After working with top-level Medicare staff, he and the other scholars will return to research and teaching at major graduate-level institutions. "Scholars in the program will learn through first-hand experience the challenges and opportunities of the Medicare program, and CMS will benefit by having geriatrician scholars working with its staff professionals on policy-related issues," said Jeffrey Kang, MD, who is a geriatrician as well as having served as CMS's chief clinical officer.

The program aligns with CMS's goal to reach out to constituency groups with a particular focus on provider organizations. Through the program, CMS will improve communications with providers, making it easier for providers to understand CMS programs and comply with Medicare regulations and instructions. Scholars will have the opportunity to bring provider perspectives and concerns to CMS at the crucial stage of policy development. Dr. Stefanacci's primary focus will be the development of the new Medicare Pharmacy Benefit program.

Please address questions and comments to Dr. Stefanacci at [richard.stefanacci@jefferson.edu](mailto:richard.stefanacci@jefferson.edu).