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MEDCHI APPLAUDS MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FOR INCREASING ACCESS TO CRITICAL SMOKING CESSATION RESOURCES

Department removes health insurance 'step therapy' protocol that was delaying access to treatment for Marylanders attempting to quit smoking

BALTIMORE, August 3, 2017 — MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, today applauded the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for removing a health insurance barrier that was preventing Medicaid patients from accessing the treatments they needed to quit smoking. The Department's guidelines had previously included a step therapy or "fail-first" protocol that required Medicaid patients to try and fail on 90 days of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) before having access to the full array of smoking cessation treatments.

"When patients seek assistance to quit smoking, they should have access to the treatments that give them the highest likelihood of success and that are based on the recommendations of their physicians. Having access to the full array of treatments will help more Marylanders succeed in quitting smoking," said MedChi CEO Gene Ransom. "Health insurance barriers such as step therapy jeopardize patient health and remove decisions about how to best treat patients from the hands of their physicians. MedChi applauds the Maryland Department of Health for taking steps to curb the impact of smoking on the health of Maryland patients."

In 2014, MedChi successfully advocated for step therapy/fail-first legislation that prevented insurance carriers from requiring patients to fail on a less costly treatment before gaining access to a more appropriate physician-prescribed treatment.

"More than 10 percent of Maryland's Medicaid costs – or more than \$567 million annually – can be attributed to smoking, which means that helping more patients quit smoking is not only good for the health of Maryland patients, but also for Maryland's bottom line," added Ransom.

For more information about MedChi or its track record of advocating policies to discourage smoking, visit www.medchi.org.

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. It is the largest physician organization in Maryland. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland.