

June 10, 2022



California  
**Rheumatology**  
Alliance

## CRA Membership E-blast

Hello {First Name},

The California Rheumatology Alliance remains dedicated to providing updated news and resources to our membership. We appreciate and encourage any feedback to assist in our service to our members. What do YOU want us to talk about? We'd love for these newsletters to be used as an opportunity for us all to learn from each other, so if there's anything specific you're interested in learning more about from other people involved with the California Rheumatology Alliance, let us know by emailing [info@calrheum.org](mailto:info@calrheum.org).

Visit our Website

## CRA 18TH ANNUAL MEETING

**May 14-15, 2022**  
**SAN FRANCISCO MARRIOTT MARQUIS**  
*San Francisco, CA*

The CRA 18th Annual Meeting last month in San Francisco was a great success! We want to thank all of you who made it out! It was amazing to see you all back in person and reconnect - squeezing 2 years of catching up into the meeting was a fun challenge! We received several positive comments throughout the meeting from members who said they had a great time at the event and were looking forward to seeing what else we had planned.

On Saturday, we had the privilege of honoring Dr. Michael Stevens at the Honorary Luncheon. Dr. Stevens was selected to receive this year's Lifetime Achievement Award and the speakers who shared their memories and personal stories really provided insight into Dr. Stevens's life and career. It was a wonderful afternoon celebrating the founder of the California Rheumatology Alliance! We've posted photos of the luncheon on our website under "Events"

Visit our website

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

### **What is new in CRA advocacy:**

The Legislature is now halfway through its' legislative year. All bills that are still alive are being heard in the policy committees in the opposite house from which they were introduced. This is where you begin to see bills begin to falter as they receive more scrutiny from Members of the opposite house.

As was discussed in the May newsletter, the big news was the deal struck between healthcare providers including the California Medical Association and the trial attorneys over a compromise to make changes to the Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act (MICRA) on the caps for non-economic damages. No changes have been made to the existing cap of \$250,000 since it was established back in 1975. The trial attorneys had submitted a ballot initiative, to be placed on the November ballot, to make significant changes to MICRA. The two sides began talking with each other and were able to reach a compromise to raise the cap and stagger the increase over the next 10 years.

**MICRA & LEGISLATION UPDATES**

The MICRA deal was placed into a legislative bill, [AB 35 \(Reyes\)](#), which was signed by the Governor in May. Prior to the Governor signing the bill, the proponents of the initiative removed it from the November ballot.

In other legislative news, CRA is co-sponsoring follow up legislation to AB 347 from last year to try and push through improvements to the step therapy and prior authorization processes that were taken out of AB 347. This bill is [AB 1880 \(Arambula\)](#) and contains the more controversial parts of AB 347 which should provide a challenging battle for us this year. These include:

- Requiring health plans to use a clinical peer where someone of the same or similar specialty is reviewing the appeal of a step therapy exception request or prior authorization request (ex. a rheumatologist is reviewing a rheumatologist and an oncologist is reviewing an oncologist)
- Requiring reporting by health plans on their utilization management practices (such as how many prior authorization and step therapy requests they deny and approve each plan year)

**Status** – Passed the Assembly and is in the Senate Health Committee

Other bills introduced which CRA will be actively working on include:

**[SB 958 \(Limon\)](#) – CRA Position – Support**

This bill addresses three growing areas of concerns as it relates to in-office injections:

- “White bagging” where payers are requiring patients to obtain their medications from a pharmacy specified by the payer and the medications are then sent to the physician for injection/infusion,
- “Brown bagging” where payers require patients to obtain their medications directly from a pharmacy and the patient brings them to the physician’s office for injection/infusion, and
- The growing trend where payers are requiring patients to have their medications injected/infusion at home.

SB 958 would make it more difficult for payers require patients to be subjected to the three situations described above.

**Status** - This bill passed the Senate and is in the Assembly Health Committee

**[SB 853 \(Wiener\)](#) – CRA Position – Support**

This bill, sponsored by the Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation, requires health plans and insurers to cover denied medications, including the prescribed dose, for the duration of an appeals process. This bill also strengthens California’s prohibition on non-medical switching by applying that same prohibition to a prescribed dose or dose level of a drug. SB 853 continues our work to better ensure patients who are stable on their medications can stay on their medications.

**Status** - This bill passed the Senate and is in the Assembly Health Committee

**[AB 2352 \(Nazarian\)](#) – CRA Position – Support**

The California Chronic Care Coalition, which CRA is a member, is sponsoring this bill to require health plans to provide patients and physicians, upon consent from the patient, access to a “real time benefit tool” that will assist the patient in understanding the cost to acquire the needed medication which will improve a patient’s ability to begin therapy without delay. CRA was asked to be one of two primary witnesses to testify in support of the bill at the Assembly Health Committee hearing on March 29<sup>th</sup>. The bill passed the Health Committee and is now headed to the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

**Status** - This bill passed the Assembly and is in the Senate Health Committee

The CRA advocacy team is excited for what lies ahead in 2022. If you would like to get involved in advocacy whether it be learning more about the bills, contacting your local legislator on important advocacy issues, or even testifying on bills being considered, please contact Tim Madden at [madden@mqadvocacy.com](mailto:madden@mqadvocacy.com)

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