

May 5, 2022



## 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.

If there are any topics you are interested in and would like for us to cover via webinar, please email [info@calrheum.org](mailto:info@calrheum.org).

Visit our Website

## CRA MEMBERSHIP DUES

The 2022 CRA Annual Membership is open for renewal! Pay your annual dues easily online for exclusive access to special membership benefits such as discounted rates on your meeting registration, tickets for amusement parks, movies, and stage shows as well as curated information surrounding news and policies that directly impact the rheumatology community.

Pay your 2022 Membership Dues today!

## CRA 18TH ANNUAL MEETING

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

We're looking forward to welcoming all in-person attendees at 18th Annual Meeting next weekend at the Marriott Marquis San Francisco. Can't make it in person? We heard your requests and got you covered - we're happy to announce our virtual registration is live!

For those attending in person - we invite you to attend the CRA Honorary Luncheon on Saturday, May 14, at 1:00 PM celebrating the Lifetime Achievements of CRA Founder, Dr. Michael Stevens. This event is included in your registration fee and we hope you'll join us for an afternoon of fun and fellowship.

Our program offers **8 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits TM** Successful completion of this CME activity, which includes participation in the evaluation component, enables the participant to earn up to **4.0 MOC** points. The education provided at this meeting will help you to keep pace with the changing healthcare environment while improving the care you provide to your patients.

Please visit [our website](#) for more information and to register. Tell your friends and colleagues about this exciting event and we hope to see you there!

We can't wait to see you there - both in person and online!

Visit our website

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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

The Legislature has just finished one of its busiest periods of the year where the policy committees have reviewed all bills introduced in 2022. There are a number of bills CRA has been actively advocating for which are listed below.

### **MICRA**

The big news in the healthcare space in April has been the deal that has been 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. [Here is a link](#) to a document that provides an outline to the deal and compares it to existing law and what the initiative would have done.

The MICRA was placed into a legislative bill, [AB 35 \(Reyes\)](#), which passed the Senate Judiciary meeting this week. The bill is being rushed to the Governor for a signature. Once signed, the trial attorneys will remove their measure from the November ballot. They have until June 28<sup>th</sup> to remove the initiative from the November ballot.

### **CRA LEGISLATION**

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 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)
- 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 oncologists is reviewing an oncologist)

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.

#### **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.

#### **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.

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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