

Lamy Center Faculty Members Help Guide Federal Policymakers

Over the past year, four Lamy Center faculty members and two graduate students have been working on a series of projects for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The Office of Health Policy in ASPE conducts health policy research, evaluation, and strategic planning activities for the Department. ASPE's work is fast-paced, with direct involvement in the policy-making process. "Almost every major issue in health policy comes through our office in some form," claims the agency website. With Medicare drug coverage such a hot political topic, it is no surprise that ASPE is involved.

In October of last year, ASPE commissioned the Lamy Center to produce a background report for a special study on prescription drugs ordered by President Clinton. Led by Lamy Center Director, [Bruce Stuart](#), the project team included [Nicole Brandt](#), PharmD, [Daniel Mullins](#), PhD, and [Frank Palumbo](#), PhD, and doctoral students [Becky Briesacher](#), MA and [Cheryl Fahlman](#), MBA. The project described for Federal policymakers what is known and needs to be learned about prescription drug coverage, prices, and utilization. The Lamy Center's study is included as an appendix to the DHHS report released in April 2000: *Report to the President: Prescription Drug Coverage, Spending, Utilization, and Prices*. The entire report is available on ASPE's website: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/drugstudy/index.htm>.

Chapter 1 of this report gives prominent attention to the results of another recent Lamy Center study, *Prescription Drug Coverage for Medicare Beneficiaries: Coverage and Health Status Matter*, by Stuart, Briesacher, and Dennis Shea, PhD, an economist at Penn State University who collaborated on this project. That analysis was published by The Commonwealth Fund in January 2000 and is available on the Fund's web site: http://www.cmwf.org/programs/medfutur/stuart_drug_ib_365.asp.

As a follow-up to the report to the president, ASPE convened the Conference on Pharmaceutical Pricing Practices, Utilization, and Costs, held Aug. 8-9 at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. Lamy Center faculty members wrote and presented two commissioned papers for this invitation-only conference that brought together 150 stake holders, policy makers, and researchers to discuss various pharmaceutical policy issues. The first paper, *Projections of Drug Approvals, Patent Expirations, and Generic Entry from 2000 to 2004*, by Mullins, Palumbo and Stuart, can be downloaded from ASPE's website at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/Drug-papers/Mullins-Palumbo%20paper-final.htm>.

The second paper, *Medication Decisions—Right and Wrong*, by Stuart and Briesacher, is available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/Drug-papers/Stuart%20paper-final.htm>. Over the next several months Lamy Center faculty members will be analyzing data for ASPE on prescription coverage rates for Medicare beneficiaries, using the just-released 1997 Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey. The results, combined with other recent work on Medicare beneficiaries' use of prescription drugs, will be presented at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in Boston, November 15. Bruce Stuart will preside over the session titled *How Research Informs the Debate Over a Medicare Drug Benefit*. In addition to Stuart, other presenters include John Poisal (Health Care Financing Administration), Stephen Crystal (Rutgers University), Judy Wagner (Congressional Budget Office), Joan Sokolovsky (ASPE), and Robin Strongin (National Health Policy Forum).