

## SOCIAL SECURITY SECTION ANNUAL UPDATE

This is our sixth year as a Section and we had the largest gathering of representatives ever for our Annual meeting. We held our meeting in conjunction with the Social Security Administration and had representatives speak from the Grand Rapids Hearing Office, a field office, and DDS. Each group presenting gave us information on recent developments in the Administration, where they were in processing claims, as well as good information on projects on the horizon.

There is currently a Bill in the Michigan House providing a free copy of medical records to our indigent clients, i.e., those applying for SSI and State Disability. For those who are not indigent, there is a very reasonable record fee structure which will cut most medical record charges down by at least fifty percent.

Michigan became a Ticket-To-Work State in November, 2002 which allows claimants receiving benefits to work with an employee network in order to ease back into the work force. All claimants receiving benefits in Michigan by now have received a "ticket" that provides for several benefits if they choose to join the program. One provision is that claimants working under this program will not automatically trigger a disability review by Social Security for a period of two years unless their earnings are above the monthly substantial gainful activity level which at this time is \$820 per month.

Nationally there is pending legislation providing for new protection to claimants who have a payee. The major part of this Bill provides protection for those claimants from abusive practices by payees. Of particular interest to practitioners is a provision in this Bill to provide for direct payment of attorney fees on SSI cases. Since an identical Bill died last year in committee, there is no telling what the status of this Bill will be. Please check with your local Congressman on the status of this important Bill.

We also saw some changes in the musculoskeletal impairment listings and had a seminar on this in January. One of the more important changes in this area is the definition of "effective ambulation." Dr. John Morovitz, a physician from DDS, gave a good talk on this subject.

We also had a very informative Summer Seminar in Frankenmuth. Drs. Gerald Schell and Malcolm Field from the nationally recognized Field Neurological Institute, spoke and showed various slides on neurosurgery and disorders of the spine. The following day we had Elaine Trippi, Ph.D. talk about treating patients with PTSD.

Our Annual Meeting this year is on Wednesday, October 8, 2003. It will be held on the first floor in the Auditorium of the Theodore Levin U. S. Courthouse, directly across the street from the Detroit OHA Office. The business section will begin at Noon with lunch served, followed by a general meeting at 1 p.m. held in conjunction with the Social Security Administration. We will follow the same format as last year having representatives from both hearing offices in Detroit and Oak Park. Also, there will be representatives from a field office, DDS and the Regional Office in Chicago.