



Recognition of Your Excellence: Transforming Your Practice With AAGL's COEMIG

Top Questions About AAGL's Center of Excellence in Minimally Invasive Gynecology (COEMIG) Program and How it Will Benefit You Today and Beyond



Dr. Palter

For years members of the AAGL have struggled with the limited acceptance and adoption of minimally invasive gynecology. We recognized that a minimally invasive approach was better for our patients and resulted in a quicker recovery, lower morbidity, and lower cost of care. Unfortunately, insurance payors were slow to accept these benefits and patients often knew nothing about their minimally invasive

options or who were the best providers. AAGL members trained and developed their endoscopic skills because they knew it was best for their patients but reimbursement never reflected the time required or benefits.

Today the tide is clearly changing. Conversations we have had with major insurance company medical directors confirmed they now recognize the value of a minimally invasive approach in gynecology and are developing plans designed to steer patients to a minimally invasive approach. One critical piece missing is the existence of a reliable network of excellent minimally invasive gynecologists; either we create the network or one will be made for us. We have been actively working for the AAGL COEMIG network to meet all the requirements to serve as this network. Experience in other specialties (such as bariatric surgery) has shown that when plans such as this exist, surgeons in the center of excellence have the greatest access to patients and the highest reimbursement. What's more, participation in national programs of excellence raises the standards and outcomes of all participants and fosters a community of excellence in the institution.

This concept is not isolated to our specialty. More than a half

dozen specialties have embraced the center of excellence model and it has been shown to have dramatic short- and long-term benefits to the surgeon, hospital, and patient.

Ever since the Council of Gynecologic Endoscopy (CGE) invited me to help address the certification and access challenges of minimally invasive gynecology I have been an avid proponent of a center of excellence program for our specialty. I'm proud to have been involved with its development from the beginning while serving on the CGE. AAGL's COEMIG program allows all minimally invasive gynecologic surgeons to band together and take control of our destiny by focusing on continuous quality improvement, objective standards and recognition of those committed to excellence, while generating and owning the evidence and data needed to take control of the debate about the value and benefits of our procedures.

AAGL has partnered with Surgical Review Corporation (SRC), the leading, non-profit administrator of center of excellence programs in other specialties to produce a comprehensive center of excellence program designed to meet the needs of our specialty. Now's the time to get involved – the Q&A below provides the information you need to understand the COEMIG program, its direct benefit to you and your hospital, and the information to help begin working toward your COEMIG designation.

Steven F. Palter, M.D., is the Program Director for COEMIG, and Chair of the COEMIG Outcomes Committee. Dr. Palter is the Medical & Scientific Director at the Gold Coast IVF in Syosset, New York, and Former President of the CGE.

How will the COEMIG designation benefit my practice or hospital?

Decreased complications and morbidity – Reducing outdated open procedures, decreasing postoperative recovery times and lowering the risk of complications that drive up the cost of healthcare.

Sharing best practice policies and pathways – Studies in other specialties such as cardiac surgery have clearly demonstrated that participation in cross-center quality improvement programs such as the AAGL COEMIG elevates each center to the level of the best.

Demonstration of better outcomes and reduced costs – Establishing a central outcomes database and universal standards to protect reimbursement rates, decrease malpractice costs, increase surgical volumes, and thrive within an accountable care organization (ACO) environment that mandates higher quality at lower costs. Our outcomes database will allow to prove the

benefits of procedures and answer important research questions and control our own data. Our goal is “two minutes or less” for data entry.

Specialty growth – Increasing the adoption of less invasive techniques, proven clinical pathways and team-based approaches to drive best-in-class gynecologic surgery.

Professional recognition and distinction – Enabling patients and referring physicians to easily identify and access centers committed to a higher standard of minimally invasive gynecologic care and distinguish themselves based on objective verifiable standards recognizable to all in this increasingly competitive healthcare market.

What is AAGL's level of commitment to this new program?

The AAGL and its leadership are fully committed to the success of the COEMIG program. AAGL partnered with Surgical Review

Corporation (SRC), a leading nonprofit patient safety and quality organization, to administer the COEMIG program. Our organizations have worked together for two years to develop a comprehensive center of excellence program that meets the needs of our members and supports our vision. AAGL is incorporating the COEMIG program into all facets of the organization. COEMIG is a unifying concept that encompasses practice standards, educational programs, nursing, research and reimbursement initiatives, and fellowship and postgraduate education.

How many surgeons and hospitals have applied for COEMIG designation?

Over 150 surgeons and hospitals have registered and are in various stages of application completion. The first site inspection was conducted in late January, and a number of inspections are slated for April.

How does the AAGL ensure fairness in the review process and eliminate bias in the COEMIG program?

The AAGL partnered with SRC to remove itself from the administration of the COEMIG program. Based on the SRC's center of excellence administration model, three volunteer committees (Standards, Review and Outcomes) were formed comprised of prominent AAGL surgeons from diverse care delivery settings, areas of practice specialization, and geographic regions. Committee members work closely with SRC to define and develop program guidelines, review designation candidates, and ensure that COEMIG is responsive and relevant to AAGL's vision and membership. To ensure objectivity and fairness, review committee members are only provided de-identified surgeon/facility information, and they must recuse themselves from the review process if they suspect a conflict of interest. The nonprofit SRC objectively verifies the data and the Review Committee then reviews the blinded data to ensure excellence standards are met.

Should I be worried about the site inspection?

Absolutely not. The SRC team works hand-in-hand with you to ensure that your facility is prepared well before an inspection date is set. SRC clinical quality experts provide preliminary reviews and requirement templates to make certain that site inspections are very much open-book tests because much of the preparation is completed pre-inspection. If you are already at the top level you will qualify for recognition. However, if your program does

not yet qualify we are committed to working with you to reach that goal.

What steps are involved in the designation process?

Step 1: Register online

Step 2: Start your application

Step 3: Achieve Provisional Status by meeting simple qualifications
Work towards meeting remaining requirements and prepare for pre-planned site inspection with guidance from SRC's clinical and administrative support team.

Step 4: Achieve designation

The entire application and approval process is designed to be able to be completed without needing any additional staff and to be as automated as possible. Total time to complete an application should be one to two weeks of part time work.

What is "Provisional Status"?

Provisional Status is provided to participants who start the application process and meet the program's provisional qualifications. These minimum standards are based on the requirements for COEMIG designation. Provisional Status is typically granted within one week of receiving the center's applications and does not require a site inspection. As Provisional participants work toward designation, the requirements serve as a guide for resource decisions and provide actionable goals for team members.

How do I get started?

The first step is to register online at www.surgicalreview.org, which takes only a few minutes to enter basic contact information. Following registration, surgeons and facilities can immediately begin working on their applications for Provisional Status.

Remember – Designation Is Easier Than You May Think

In less than five minutes, you can find out if your minimally invasive gynecology program is ready to be designated as a center of excellence. Answering 10 simple questions is all it takes. Visit www.surgicalreview.org today to take this important step towards recognition of your program.

**Questions? Contact SRC Support at 1.877.459.0710
or coemigsupport@surgicalreview.org.**



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Submit Abstracts online at www.aagl.org

Abstracts are due by April 15, 2012

(a \$35 fee will be assessed if an abstract is submitted between April 15-30, 2012)