NYACP’s Advocacy Internship Experience
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During my time in the advocacy internship, I was able to accomplish much that I hoped to do. Through my access to Statewatch, I observed the daily workings of our state legislature. I parsed through the new bills each day to search for those focused on health policy. This allowed me to see the number and variety of bills introduced each day, as well as affording me the opportunity to learn how to read the bill text itself. By attending weekly subcommittee meetings for Health Policy and Insurance, I was able to observe firsthand how bills become modified and move through the legislature.

In order to learn about the process behind creating healthcare policy on a more granular level, I focused on a particular topic with bills already in the legislature. Specifically, there are several current bills on prior authorization and step therapy reform. By working with the Aimed Alliance nonprofit group and the NYS Bleeding Disorders Coalition patient advocacy group, I was able to both learn about and participate in the process of advocacy. I attended several meetings where we discussed the importance of getting cosponsors for the step therapy legislation to help move it from subcommittee to a full vote. Further, I was able to join members of these groups during an advocacy day where we met with the offices of seven assembly members to advocate for step therapy reform. As the physician at these meetings, I was surprised to see how my firsthand experience with healthcare systems and patients could provide a unique perspective to the conversation. The outcome of these meetings was that the step therapy reform bills gained two new cosponsors, which we hope will help it progress through the legislature.

Lastly, I conducted research into prior authorization and step therapy reform, both at the state level and federally. While New York first passed legislation several years back to limit prior authorization use in emergencies, many states have yet to enact, or just passed, similar policies. However, some of these same states are also working on bills that are even more progressive than the current New York legislation, sometimes eliminating prior authorization entirely. Federally, CMS just announced a large overhaul of prior authorization, which includes aspects of New York’s prior and current legislation; however, it will only affect services and procedures, not medications. It was fascinating to see this wide variation in reform policies across the country, and I was able to combine this data into an abstract for the NYACP advocacy, quality, and patient care category of the poster competition.