



## **A Talk with Bryant Sheehy, MD, our Next President**



**Bryant Sheehy, MD**

By Earl R. "Trey" Washburn, MD

SOME FOLKS SEEK OUT LEADERSHIP roles, and others find leadership comes to them. Our SSVMS president for 2002 belongs to the second group.

Bryant Sheehy, MD, seems surprised to find himself in line to be our next Medical Society President. "I've always been a 'back seat' sort of person," he admits. "I became involved with the Society's Board of Directors four years ago, because I wanted to try to make a difference and I thought the place to start was at SSVMS."

As a young man, Bryant thought about pursuing the ministry as a career, but felt uncomfortable with the public speaking requirements that come with a career in the pulpit. He, also, considered careers as a farmer, an artist and an architect. Medicine called instead.

Dr. Sheehy (pronounced SHE-high) was born, raised and educated in Alabama. His residency in neurology was done at UCLA Medical Center. There he was introduced to the Chair of the Division of Neurology in 1960 by Dr. Magoun, who had won the Nobel Prize that year for his work on the reticular formation of the brain.

His wife of 41 years, Joanne, was also born in Alabama, but lived in Sacramento since the age of nine years. Joanne went to college at the University of Alabama, where she met Bryant at a fraternity party. After medical school, residency and a two-year stint in the military, the Sheehys came to Sacramento in 1966. Bryant has had a private practice of neurology here for the last 35 years. Bryant and Joanne have three children and two grandchildren.

Although he has always been a member, Dr. Sheehy says he was too busy for most of his career to get involved in Medical Society affairs. Looking back on this, he deeply regrets that he, like so many members, was not more active.

"I realize now that we cannot effect anything about the delivery of health care without being involved in our Medical Society and politics at the state and local level," Bryant says. He would like to see more SSVMS members involved in the Society's various efforts, and hopes that he can see that the membership is educated to the activities and internal organization of SSVMS. "Members are needed for their participation and their input," he says. "Doctors need to know they are needed."

Dr. Sheehy worries that medicine is losing its position in deciding what is best for

patients. "I feel concerned about doctors not having the final say in the care of their patients," he says. "We doctors need to regain control of our profession. I am very worried when we have clerks or nurses at an insurance company telling us what we can or cannot do for our patients."

Our next SSVMS President would like to see some sort of universal coverage for basic health insurance come into being. He is not so sure that he would like to see the government operate such a system, but he worries about those who cannot or will not get health insurance coverage for themselves. "'Mandated' is a word I don't like, but I don't see what else we can do. Basic health coverage should be required."

Bryant has dropped any affiliation with almost all of the health plans - even Medicare. For the past 11 years he has been a solo practitioner. For the last two years, Bryant's practice has been comprised of post-traumatic brain injury patients and long-established patients from prior years, when he consulted on and treated patients in nine hospitals in our area.

Bryant is Medical Director of Neurobehavioral Cognitive Services (NSC), a rehabilitation center for brain injury in Dixon, California. Besides being involved in the clinical instruction of neurology residents since the inception of the UC Davis Medical Center, he has been the neurology consultant to the Sacramento Correctional Health Services, the Sacramento California Youth Authority, and the Sacramento Military Entrance Processing Station. In the beginning of his practice, Bryant was probably one of three neurologists in the state north of San Francisco and even had patient referrals from Oregon.

Does our next President have any pressing agenda for the coming year? "I would like to see 99 percent or more of the physicians in our area active members of SSVMS and fully participating," he says. "Beyond that, I hope to promote our members being more aware of the activities and internal operations of the Society. I also want to encourage more equitable reimbursement of 'treaters' in health care delivery for their labors."

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