



A Letter to a Friend

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By Bryant Sheehy, MD

This is a recent letter to a colleague who has not joined the Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society.

I am writing in regards to our conversation at the hospital a couple of weeks ago, when I asked you to join the Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society. In my mind, it is inconceivable that a well-informed physician would not choose to be a member of "organized medicine."

The essential, "grassroots" components of organized medicine are the local medical societies; only their members can be members of the California Medical Association. The CMA Board of Trustees is composed of representatives from local medical societies. Dr. John Whitelaw, the President of the CMA this year, is a member of SSVMS.

Once a year, the CMA House of Delegates meets for three days to prepare an action agenda for the coming year. These actions arise from resolutions from individual members of our local medical societies. The House of Delegates is an inspiring experience and a prime example of the democratic process in protecting and advancing the delivery of healthcare

There is no substitute for the SSVMS, CMA or AMA. Specialty societies are appropriate and certainly have their place in "organized medicine." However, they should be seen as adjuncts to the broader-based SSVMS, CMA and AMA. A small specialty society by itself is rarely going to have the clout to affect legislation.

The SSVMS, CMA and AMA represent us at all levels of government. They are well established and recognized. We need to use them, not ignore or desert them. If you do not agree with their course, become active in them — even if temporarily — and at least try to make changes. Complaint without action adds up to ZERO! Withholding membership because of disagreement or spite is SELF-DESTRUCTIVE! These PHYSICIAN organizations are our best opportunity to promote our professional ideals for healthcare.

Despite inflation, SSVMS has not had a dues increase since 1985 — in fact, in 2000 dues were reduced by \$65. Dues support the activities of our Society and a superior, reliable and dedicated staff. SSVMS also has a confidential program for physicians having financial hardship to assist them to maintain membership. The SSVMS started in 1855 and incorporated in 1868. A list of some of its accomplishments is enclosed with this letter [see page 4].

You are an excellent physician. However, you can also contribute to the broader aspect of the delivery and protection of healthcare for yourself and your community. A physician cannot be true to his profession by abandoning this broader duty. You and I both know that only physicians can assure good healthcare now or in the future.

I also think it is inherently unfair to benefit from the accomplishments of organized medicine without contributing your own participation and financial support.

bryantsheehy@yahoo.com

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society
5380 Elvas Avenue #100 • Sacramento, CA 95819
916.452.2671 PH • 916.452.2690 FX • Email: info@ssvms.org

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