



Moving Forward in 2005

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By Satya N. Chatterjee, MD

I consider it a distinct honor and privilege to be your President - more so because I am the first foreign-born President from the Indian subcontinent and, I believe, also the oldest (age 70) sitting President.

California has 89,025 licensed physicians, of whom 3,466 are in Sacramento County, 527 are in Yolo County and 274 are in El Dorado County. Of these 4,267 physicians, only 1,500 are active members of SSVMS.

I thank these physicians who became members to support the cause of organized medicine and because they carry the burden of those who are not members. I often wonder why the others have not become members. Our annual dues of \$920 have not increased for years, so I invite them to write to me personally about why they don't feel that \$2.52 a day is worthwhile.

No one can deny that the practice situation, while not ideal, has become substantially more tolerable than it was 6 to 8 years ago. We should not forget the days when an HMO could de-select any physician.

In addition, we have seen the price that insurance companies such as Aetna and CIGNA have paid to correct their unfair policies to avoid paying physicians.

Dozens of bills have passed through the California Legislature during the last two years that have immensely benefited physicians. These benefits are the result of the efforts of the CMA and the dedication of Steve Thompson, whose untimely death saddened all of us. Steve was a personal friend who educated me on many topics. In his eulogy, the late Congressman Robert Matsui said he was lucky that Steve had accepted him as a friend. Anyone who is Steve's friend is in. I also felt I was lucky to be his friend, and I appreciated his candid opinions.

Membership is at an all time high for us. I wish to thank four major medical groups - Kaiser-Permanente, Sutter Medical Group, Woodland Clinic Group, and U.C. Davis - for underwriting the full membership dues for their physicians. This year, the Medical Clinic of Sacramento has agreed to partially subsidize the dues for their physicians.

The large groups are participating, so any further increase in membership must come from solo practitioners

(I am one) and small groups who are receiving benefits at no cost to themselves but at a cost to their colleagues.

My plans for the year:

1. I intend to continue the efforts of my predecessor, Dr. Richard Pan, to encourage physicians to become more personally involved in politics at county or state levels.

2. I will work to increase cooperation between the local hospitals and our medical society, and to develop and nurture a personal relationship with the medical staff and the hospital administrators. We can benefit mutually only by working together.
3. I have been involved in working on the limited English proficiency problem locally. A study by the California Endowment has shown the medical care of LEP patients suffers because of language barriers. Federal law mandates translator services be provided, but does not specify where funding will come from. Seminars will be organized to educate all physicians and to address and try to solve the problem of funding.

Have faith in your leadership, be vocal and take an interest in all issues.

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