



## What Does SSVMS Do?

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



By Kuldp Sandhu, MD

IN THE MAY/JUNE ISSUE of Sierra Sacramento Valley Medicine, I wrote about what SSVMS is. In this article, I address the frequently asked question of what SSVMS does.

As you probably already know, membership in SSVMS and the California Medical Association (CMA) is a combined/joint membership. Membership in the American Medical Association (AMA) is optional. Hence, a more appropriate focus should be what SSVMS and CMA do for public health, patients, and medical profession/professionals.

### Public Health

In 2001, the Medical Society actively lobbied the Sacramento Board of Supervisors to use the tobacco settlement funds for health-related purposes. In 2005, SSVMS again vigorously lobbied the Sacramento Board of Supervisors, albeit unsuccessfully, to authorize pharmacists to give clean needles and syringes to drug addicts to help cut down the risk of infections.

SSVMS took a leadership role in addressing the problems of our emergency room departments regarding overcrowding and ambulance diversions. SSVMS was instrumental in creating the Emergency Care Committee, at whose meetings emergency room physician leaders from all local hospitals address ongoing problems facing our local emergency rooms.

SSVMS conducted a physician supply study regarding the impact of the declining number of physicians in our region.

We have several programs through our Community Service, Education and Research Fund (CSERF) that provide free care to the indigent (those without health insurance) using volunteer physicians.

Our Adopt-A-School Program links physicians with local schools for health education and mentoring services.

To show its ongoing commitment to public health, the CMA is currently sponsoring a bill in the California Legislature to create a Department of Public Health (SB 162, by Sen. Debra Ortiz).

### What SSVMS does for Patients

Our Professional Conduct and Ethics Committee reviews disputes between physicians and patients. A physician case manager is assigned to each case and interviews the patient and the physician. The committee discusses the issue with the case manager and written communications are then generated to both parties.

The Medical Society receives dozens of calls each week from patients who need help with referral to agencies, organizations, and self-help groups. SSVMS also provides

information to callers about their physicians if they are members of the Medical Society.

The Medical Society fought to preserve the physician-patient relationship by speaking out against mass terminations of physicians by for-profit HMOs (Foundation Health Plan/FHP) and independent practice associations (i.e., Hill Physicians Medical Group).

SSVMS participated in establishing pre-natal care and access programs for pregnant Medi-Cal mothers.

### **What SSVMS/CMA do for the Medical Profession**

The CMA vigorously defends the 1975 landmark Medical Injury Compensation Reform Act, or MICRA. This legislation has become a paradigm for tort reform efforts at the federal level. It is estimated that MICRA saves every California physician as much as \$30,000 per year in premium. More importantly, it has significantly mitigated the access issues for patients.

In any given year, there may be hundreds of individual bills with medical implications before the California Legislature. The CMA studies these bills and takes proactive positions (*sponsor, support, oppose, etc.*).

Members of SSVMS/CMA have access to CMA on-call documents (about 70,000 pages) dealing with a myriad of issues that physicians face.

The Medical Society provides our members with a long list of benefits: discounted insurance products, publications (*i.e., SSV Medicine, the Membership Directory* and a bulletin called *On Friday*), free travel accident coverage, free conference room rental, free contract analysis, etc.

The Historical Committee helps maintain the medical museum.

SSVMS provides public and media relations for the medical profession.

SSVMS studies important healthcare issues and publishes reports (*e.g., physician supply study, physician burnout study*) and position papers (*e.g., pain management*).

The Medical Society also provides scholarships to local students attending medical school.

Through the Medical Review and Advisory Committee, objective opinions are given to defense lawyers on pending malpractice cases.

This is by no means a complete list of what SSVMS and CMA do. However, it should be clear that SSVMS provides an invaluable service to the local community and physicians.

ksandhu90@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

Copyright © 2000-2008 Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society - All Right's Reserved