



Editor's Letter

David D. Vega, MD FAAEM

As you may already know, David Kramer, MD FAAEM, recently resigned as editor of *Common Sense*. AAEM owes Dr. Kramer a debt of gratitude for his service as editor for the past three years. He has certainly continued the legacy of excellence established by preceding editors of the newsletter. We wish him the best of luck as he begins his tenure on the ABEM board of directors. This new position is quite an achievement and a fitting role for someone who has committed much of his career to the education of emergency medicine residents. It is also exciting to see an active member of AAEM, previous board member and Peter Rosen Award winner selected for such a prominent position.

I consider it a privilege to serve as Dr. Kramer's successor as editor of *Common Sense*. I am dedicated to ensuring that this newsletter remains informative and useful to all members of AAEM. As I move into this new role, I challenge you to read through every issue and provide us with feedback on what works and what does not. *Common Sense* is the newsletter of the Academy and we will continue to keep you up-to-date with the latest happenings in the organization, but we also want to know what can be done to make this publication the most useful it can be for you.

In this issue, you will find an article by outgoing board member James Li, MD FAAEM, who notes that we cannot take the continued success of AAEM for granted. Only through the continued dedication and hard work of its members will AAEM be able to continue to fight for excellence in the care of patients in emergency departments across the country. I join Dr. Li in wholeheartedly encouraging you to actively participate within the organization.

Emergency medicine was not founded by passive individuals. It took the sweat, tears and personal sacrifice of many individuals who wanted the best for patients and providers to get us where we are today. We owe it to these founders of our specialty, our current and future colleagues and most importantly, our patients, to ensure the continued

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AAEM Mission Statement

The American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM) is the specialty society of emergency medicine. AAEM is a democratic organization committed to the following principles:

1. Every individual should have unencumbered access to quality emergency care provided by a specialist in emergency medicine.
2. The practice of emergency medicine is best conducted by a specialist in emergency medicine.
3. A specialist in emergency medicine is a physician who has achieved, through personal dedication and sacrifice, certification by either the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) or the American Osteopathic Board of Emergency Medicine (AOBEM).
4. The personal and professional welfare of the individual specialist in emergency medicine is a primary concern to the AAEM.
5. The Academy supports fair and equitable practice environments necessary to allow the specialist in emergency medicine to deliver the highest quality of patient care. Such an environment includes provisions for due process and the absence of restrictive covenants.
6. The Academy supports residency programs and graduate medical education, which are essential to the continued enrichment of emergency medicine, and to ensure a high quality of care for the patients.
7. The Academy is committed to providing affordable high quality continuing medical education in emergency medicine for its members.
8. The Academy supports the establishment and recognition of emergency medicine internationally as an independent specialty and is committed to its role in the advancement of emergency medicine worldwide.

Membership Information

Fellow and Full Voting Member: \$365 (Must be ABEM or AOBEM certified in EM or Pediatric EM)

*Associate Member: \$250

Emeritus Member: \$250 (Must be 65 years old and a full voting member in good standing for 3 years)

Affiliate Member: \$365 (Non-voting status; must have been, but are no longer ABEM or AOBEM certified in EM)

International Member: \$125 (Non-voting status)

AAEM/RSA Member: \$50 (voting in AAEM/RSA elections only)

Student Member: \$50 (voting in AAEM/RSA elections only)

*Associate membership is limited to graduates of an ACGME or AOA approved Emergency Medicine Program.

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Due Process, a California Sequel

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I recently filed suit in the Los Angeles, CA, Superior Court after I lost my medical staff membership and clinical privileges without the benefit of a fair hearing. As a founding fellow and lifetime member, past director and secretary-treasurer, former editor of *Common Sense* and past presidential candidate of AAEM, I filed suit because of a violation of my due process rights.

My case, *Fenton v. Shea et al*, will reinvigorate a little known and mostly forgotten California Supreme Court opinion, *Anton v. San Antonio Community Hospital*, 567 P.2d 1162 (Cal. 1977). The *Anton* case affords physicians in California due process rights. In my case,

I made formal written requests for fair hearings at two hospitals. Both hospitals denied my requests. My case is in the discovery phase.

I recently began law school at the Abraham Lincoln University (ALU) School of Law in Los Angeles. The California State Bar fully recognizes this unique school, with a four year curriculum designed for students who work full time. ALU allows students to complete studies and examinations both in real time and/or via the internet using real time or archived lectures. I hope to use my law degree to advocate for physician practice rights, to include not only due process rights, but to defend medical-malpractice cases.

The Perspective

James Li, MD FAAEM

In leaving the AAEM Board of Directors after eight years, having served with four presidents, some of you may be interested in my perspective on the organization and its development.

The Academy today is mature, resource-rich and robust, as evidenced by the recent roster of superb board candidates both ready and qualified to fill the positions that Dave Kramer, MD FAAEM, and I are vacating. In the same way that we are advocates for our patients, I can confidently report that over these past eight years, the Academy has developed sufficiently to become a direct and powerful advocate for us, as practicing emergency physicians.

However, the combination of means and principles (even those that solidly represent patient and physician-based ethics) has not made the Academy popular or guaranteed its future success. As a member-driven organization, the Academy is involved in multiple simultaneous endeavors. Some of these, such as its educational forums, are low-risk extensions of its mission. Others, such as its litigation cases, represent thoroughly considered high-risk efforts to radically

improve the emergency care environment for us and our patients. As a participant in the debate over whether or not to commit resources to these high-risk endeavors, I can assure you that we will feel the impact of these efforts no matter what the eventual outcome.

Following a great deal of growing pain, I am proud that the present Academy is healthy and strong. Yet, I must warn you that we cannot take its continued existence and success for granted. If history is any measure, the Academy will not prevail simply on principle.

So, my message is this: in the busy, full life that we live, make the Academy part of your consciousness. Be an active member. If you have the means, make measured periodic donations to the Foundation. Believe me, it's money well spent.

Both Dave and I thank you for the opportunity to serve on the board.

Just another member now,

James Li, MD FAAEM

Current news and updates can now be found on the AAEM website



www.aaem.org

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promotion of the principles espoused by AAEM. I would encourage you to read through the AAEM website (www.aaem.org), learn more about the history of emergency medicine and AAEM and decide where you can help support the organization.

Having an active life outside of emergency medicine, I can understand the challenges to balancing one's personal and professional lives. So if you are finding it difficult to commit to service with AAEM right now, consider making a contribution to the AAEM Foundation instead. How about working one extra shift and donating the money earned to the Foundation? Your tax-deductible contribution will help with AAEM's involvement in pivotal cases related to the professional control of the practice of emergency medicine.

Regardless of how you do it, now is the time to get more involved with AAEM. Learn the issues. Educate your colleagues. Invest a bit of your time and money towards guaranteeing the future of our specialty. After all, AAEM is unequivocally dedicated to supporting you as a specialist in emergency medicine!