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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Francine Vogler, MD

Cal/AAEM PRESIDENT

It is with great pleasure that I accept the position of President of Cal/AAEM. It is a privilege to follow in the footsteps of Drs. Kazzi, Windham, and Lotfipour. This will be extremely difficult to do.

No one can replicate Dr. Antoine Kazzi's boundless energy and enthusiasm. His accomplishments in our industry seem limitless. Cal/AAEM's first elected president was responsible not only for the creation of our chapter but also for the formation of the annual Cal/AAEM Business Forum. Together with our past Vice President and current Board member, Dr. Robert Derlet, Dr. Kazzi also established the California Journal of Emergency Medicine (CalJEM). He then worked diligently as its managing editor. CalJEM was then led and enhanced through the tireless contribution of its Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Robert Rodriguez. CalJEM is distributed quarterly to 2000 Board certified California emergency physicians. Dr. Kazzi also played a vital role in opening dialogue between Cal/AAEM and Cal/ACEP, particularly in those areas in which we share common goals.

Dr. Paul Windham continued to forge the alliance between Cal/ACEP and Cal/AAEM. He distinguished himself by becoming intimately involved in legislative and government affairs, with a particular interest in HMO reimbursement. As a Cal/AAEM officer, he worked diligently to establish the California key contact network of volunteers—drawn from both Cal/AAEM and Cal/ACEP. Dr. Windham also established clear guidelines on the role of Cal/AAEM and how we differ from Cal/ACEP. Cal/AAEM clearly became the strong organization that could and would be an effective advocate for the working emergency physician.

Dr. Shahram Lotfipour continued the annual Cal/AAEM Business Forum and continued to develop excellent relations with Cal/ACEP, especially in the area of government affairs. Dr. Lotfipour created the Women in Emergency Medicine Business

Forum. Dr. Lotfipour's experience in academic medicine has led to Cal/AAEM's sponsorship of the upcoming Medical Student EM Symposium at UCI.

Cal/AAEM again sponsored the annual Legislative Leadership Conference (LLC) along with Cal/ENA and Cal/ACEP. The Emergency Medical LLC was held in Sacramento on March 16, 2005. The LLC is designed to update legislators on our stand as emergency physicians on current political bills and agendas. The day was devoted to trying to increase the revenue flow into the emergency medical services system. The most important issue discussed was the Perata bill. This bill addresses the payment of non-contracted providers by health plans.

I am proud to introduce our new Board of Directors. Our new Vice President and Treasurer, Dr. Steve Gabaeff, has a diverse background in both clinical and administrative medicine. He has an intimate understanding of technology and the role it can play in informatics in Emergency Medicine. Steve was selected to be Cal/AAEM's representative at the annual LLC. Dr. Gabaeff represented Cal/AAEM's input at the LLC and most recently has been involved in helping write revisions to the Perata bill. The Perata bill is being written now by emergency medicine physicians and affords us a unique opportunity to participate in the actual writing of a legislative bill.

Cal/AAEM's new Secretary, Dr. Joanne Williams, comes from an academic background at Martin Luther King Hospital. This past February at Cal/AAEM's Scientific Assembly, Dr. Williams established the first End-of-Life course, a requirement all California physicians will have to complete by the year 2006. This course will be given annually and will be available online in the near future.

Our newly elected Cal/AAEM Board members are Dr. Michael Buchele, Dr. Robert Derlet, Dr. Kevin Kelly, Dr., Peter Mishky, Dr. Andrew Nevitt, Dr. Robert Rodriguez, Dr. Stuart Swadron, Dr. Jeannie Tsai and Dr. Robert Vizzard.

VISIT OUR SITE, WWW.CALAAEM.ORG

In our first few weeks as your newly elected Board, we have created our own Cal/AAEM website, which we hope you will visit. Our website, located at www.calaaem.org, features issues, political information and educational sessions of importance to the California emergency medicine physician. You may also renew your membership online. Please visit the website and let us know if you have any suggestions for its improvement or if you would like us to consider your posting for the website. We want to hear from you.

WHAT'S COMING FROM Cal/AAEM?

Our primary focus in the coming years will be on developing our political presence. Emergency physicians need to be at the forefront of trying to stop the coming implosion of emergency care as we know it.

SOUTH BAY HOSPITALS ARE IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY

And so is our entire health care system. One out of every five patients in the South Bay was diverted to other hospitals during 2004. The figure nationwide is nearly one out of every four patients.

How can this be and what does it mean? Obviously, patient transit times are prolonged and sometimes dangerous. Patients have to wait longer to be seen and all hospital emergency rooms are all overcrowded. Patients who require admission may get stuck in the emergency room for more than 24 hours if the hospital has “no beds” (or not enough nurses or inadequate nurse/staffing ratios).

Beyond that, the paramedic system is completely overloaded and in crisis. Patients are transferred to hospitals other than where their treating physicians are located, or, in the case of HMOs, to non-contracted facilities. The system is spiraling out of control and there is no solution in sight.

THE EMS COMMUNITY MUST BECOME PART OF THE SOLUTION

The solution must come from us. Rather than living with the problem (and complaining), we must become part of the solution. We must work diligently at helping to identify the issues, the causative factors and propose workable solutions. Unfortunately, this involves looking at financial issues and problems. It also means becoming involved with the politicians and lobbyists to make sure our interests and those of our patients are being represented. One facility in Northern California recently admitted to “turking” non-emergent patients out of the emergency room to a local urgent care center. Part of the problem or part solution? What are your thoughts?

Cal/AAEM is ready to be involved on your behalf. We need to hear from you and hear your ideas. Please contact any one of the Board members at their listed email addresses or calaaem@aaem.org if you have issues you would like to discuss.

On behalf of the 2005—2006 Cal/AAEM Board, I want to thank all of you for your votes of confidence and we look forward to being able to serve effectively in our respective terms at the Board.