

President's Message

Howard Baron, MD, FAAP, CCMS President 2011-12

I am pleased to have the honor to serve as the 57th president of the Clark County Medical Society.

It seems not that long ago that my family and I moved to the Las Vegas Valley, straight from my fellowship at UCLA. Like many of my colleagues here in Southern Nevada, I was recruited by someone in my specialty who had blazed the way for several years on her own, and desperately needed help keeping up with the heavy demand for her services. That was 1993, and Las Vegas was just realizing the beginning of its boom years, with spiraling population growth, construction still yet to peak, and seemingly endless opportunities for professional growth and success.

Eighteen years later, our community has faced a devastating series of events, including a national recession that hit hardest here, massive unemployment, foreclosures and an overall devastating economic impact on our patients and their families.

The events over the past several years in our medical community have also had similar impact. We saw spiraling rates for our liability insurance when in 2003, an insurance underwriting company with a majority of the physicians in our state subscribed, decided to exit the business. At that point we found a need as a community of professionals to come together to push a ballot initiative that enacted tort reform, which has been a rousing success in keeping doctors in our state, and in fact lowering the cost of liability insurance to more reasonable rates, while increasing the degree of competition for our patronage amongst underwriters.

We have weathered a huge breach of infection control standards among a few specialists who are alleged to have put cost ahead of patient safety, and have suffered seemingly unending scrutiny in our news media, who sometimes seek to indict our entire medical community while the acts of only a few seem to allow them to generalize about the quality of medical care across all practitioners.

We have more recently seen a series of articles in our local newspaper castigating our hospitals about their rates of infection, complications, and sentinel events, as if to say that our patients are best served by leaving our community for care than to stay here and risk some ill fate under our watch. Transparency seems to be the catch word of our local media and some public officials, and we are all under ever-increasing scrutiny as we attempt to do the best we can every day for each of our patients.

All of this, along with tremendous changes in healthcare financing, can make being a physician a mighty overwhelming and at times, disheartening task here in Southern Nevada. Yet, most of us still get out of bed every day, make our way to the office or hospital, and attempt to render the very best care we are capable of, because that is what we took an oath to do.

My primary objective in the coming year is to try to balance out the seemingly unending attacks on our profession with increasing exposure of all that is great in our medical community. There are so many extraordinarily well trained primary care and specialty doctors in our midst, and they are performing amazing feats in the healing arts on a daily basis. While it may not make a copy editor at a newspaper excited to report on this, we should be doing more to promote what is positive about our medical care here to our community at large. It always amazes me when I hear of a patient who has sought care outside of Nevada for an ailment that could have been treated by an excellent professional in our community, yet they did not know such care was available here, or were told by friends or even a physician here that they'd best travel for care.

Clearly, we have more work to do to get the word out that great care is available in almost all areas of medicine here. If some patients choose to leave us for care, let it not be because we did nothing to enlighten our community about the level of expertise we have right in our own town.

As your president, I would like to highlight the fine work that is being done in all areas of medicine here, and I invite you to contact me to discuss a cutting edge treatment or procedure that you are providing, so that we may assure that the word gets out to our colleagues and to the community at large.

Most importantly, please join us as a member of the CCMS, and allow your voice to be heard when important issues affecting physicians and our patients are brought forth by our legislature, our media and by individuals who may not be fully aware of what we do every day. Benefits such as discounts on malpractice premiums, goods and services, and exposure on our website and through our referral service will pay dividends far beyond the price of membership.

Let's work together to recapture the confidence of our colleagues, our community and our media in order to make Southern Nevada a top notch place to practice and receive medical care!