

IT'S OUR MEDICAL SOCIETY – LET'S USE IT !

I have an advantage. I have been involved with the Medical Society ever since I started practicing medicine. Maybe it was my partners, some of who were Past Presidents, or my fascination that I could have someone at the Library do my research for me. What ever the reason, the fact that they would do the search and even deliver the books to my office (usually within a day) made me feel like I had finally arrived! I just couldn't imagine not being a member! Yet as I speak to members and colleagues, the role of the Medical society is not always clear to them.

Traditionally the Society has been a services oriented organization with physician advocacy functions on a local/county basis. Besides the library privileges, there is grievance mediation, credentialing, patient referrals, collection services, health insurance, legal advice, contract analysis and a recent addition, World Medical Leaders, which provides potentially 260 hours per year of category I CME credits at no charge to MCMS members. Hopefully by now you have received a letter inviting you to obtain a FREE, one-on-one, 45-minute session with a nationally known practice management consultant, The Sage Group. They can help you with billing, overhead issues, Medicare, staff turnover and most anything that you may need in operating your office. This is a great benefit to our members, and I encourage you to use it if you need it. In the past several local issues concerning physician/hospital relations have been resolved through the Medical Society.

The Arizona Medical Association has traditionally been the legislative arm dealing with the state and national political issues. It is this distinction that most physicians have not been aware of; however, that doesn't mean we can't have a stance in that arena if we so choose.

“Project 2002” for the Medical society will entail some topics near and dear to us. First will be the impending malpractice crisis. That in itself may be news to some of us (then again some may say its been a crisis for the last 25 years!) If you're not already aware, all but two malpractice carriers are going to quit writing policies in Arizona. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what that means; huge rate increases. The MCMS and ArMA will be meeting with the companies to find out the specifics of the situation and explore or examine any alternatives. The actuaries should be able to tell us if there are any remedies that we could employ. We will keep you advised. By the way, predominately state laws drive malpractice claims, so your local representatives (State Senators and Representatives of the House) are the ones to address on this issue.

What makes this so important is that liability is one of our fixed costs of doing business and we can't just raise our rates to cover it like we have in the past. Hospital privileges have been tied to having liability coverage for some time now. At my last credentialing it was mandatory to have 1 million/3 million-dollar coverage for all the hospitals. Now there is another issue; why should the hospitals mandate our level of coverage?

These are some of the local issues that we will be addressing this year. Any local areas of concern you have can be brought to the Board. We welcome your input and invite you to write, or better yet, attend the board meetings we have every month. It's our Medical Society, let's use it! See you next month!

Mark E. Baldree, M.D.
President