

Strong Position of Experience

Well, the year is almost over. The year has been a good one. The Society has had a few bumps in the road this year but it seems to be gaining strength and is in the process of launching a new avenue of service that will be a strong benefit to the membership. We have begun a trend to have more social events with the intent to bring the Society together to interact more socially as well as professionally. The Body World event was a tremendous success with over 400 attendees. Everyone that attended had a great time and we received many request to hold more events. The MCMS Annual October event with Steve Benson was a great success and his ability to find humor in all of our politicians was especially entertaining. The caricature of “yours truly” was fun and unfortunately very true to life!

The survey of insurance companies was interesting. A few weeks later the AMA published a study which was remarkably similar in results to ours! This report gave support to our conclusions. The basic substance of the study identified the companies that were easier to work with and more perplexing to deal with. The winners in no way identified the best paying companies but did reveal the companies that did the best job with dealing with the physicians and interactions with our staffs. The poorer performers are more difficult to deal with and delay in payments often cause real problems with small practices. It would seem that the insurance companies would take this as constructive criticism. Unfortunately, I am not sure that they will use this information for their own benefit but I would hope they may use this information as impetus to make process improvements. Time will tell.

The editorials have been fun and I hope to have stimulated some conversation and self evaluation with reference to becoming involved. In the last few weeks I have been witness to several events that have brought to mind just how easily things can go wrong when good intentions are not thought through by individuals that are involved directly with making the decisions. This makes Cash Beechler, one of our past presidents, saying “Ready, Fire, Aim” very appropriate. When changes are needed, we really must consider all ramifications of an action as well as the contingency plans if things do not develop as planned.

The events above brought to mind what I see as sentinel events in the history of the practice of medicine. The next year will determine how the practice of medicine will evolve. The plans of action are being formed in the political arena as this year ends. The direction of medicine will be shaped by the information individuals relay to politicians. Often, the information comes from academic related physicians who by their status are deemed experts. They have great intentions but often are not familiar with the day to day difficulties that the rank and file physicians experience. This leads to the “Ready, Aim, Fire” results.

What can we do to correct this problem? Get involved! We as practicing physicians that are suffering through the numerous stresses of having to see more patients in less time;

document to get paid rather than truly communicate; subject ourselves to legal risks without compensation in emergency rooms, hospitals and even from routine phone calls, must make ourselves heard. We must make our Medical Society a stronger voice. Strength in numbers is real. We must contact our legislators and let them know what the problems are. Of greater importance, we need to come up with reasonable recommendations that are well thought out and all of the contingencies addressed. We must begin to lead from the strong position of experience. We cannot let the experts from the “ivory towers” present the only points of view.

As the President of the Maricopa Medical Society I have enjoyed the interactions with all of you. I hope I have, if nothing else, stimulated you to think about what you may be able to offer. Think what you may be able to contribute to the practice of medicine, the Society and to the future of medicine. Time is short. The stakes are high. My mother was right, “these are perilous times”.

I wish Ed Donahue well and I am interested in his insight into the problems we face in the coming year. I thank the board of directors, Tony Mitten, and Dan Mitten for all their help. I thank you for your confidence and the opportunity to be your president.

Jud Tillinghast, M.D.
President