A CONVERSATION WITH

New MMA President
Donald Jacobs, M.D.

It makes perfect sense that Donald Jacobs, M.D., is a guitar player. After all, as a surgeon of 30-plus years, he knows a thing or two about using his hands. But guitar-playing (he is a member of a rock band called HC/MC made up of Hennepin County Medical Center employees) and scalpel-wielding will take a back seat over the next 12 months as Jacobs assumes the role of the MMA’s 148th president.

In this new role, Jacobs will crisscross the state meeting with practices large and small to hear about their concerns and priorities.

Taking a leadership position is nothing new for Jacobs. Since 2012, he has been HCMC’s chief of clinical operations. Prior to that, he served 12 years as chair and CEO of Hennepin Faculty Associates, before it merged with HCMC. He has also served as interim chief of HCMC’s department of surgery and as director of both its surgical residency program and its medical student surgical site rotation.

In addition, Jacobs is an assistant professor in the department of surgery at the University of Minnesota. If that wasn’t enough, he was a governor of the American College of Surgeons and a board member and past-president of the Association for Surgical Education.

Jacobs takes over as MMA president after serving several years on the board of trustees and, most recently, as chair of the MMA’s new Policy Council. He is also a member of both the Twin Cities Medical Society and the AMA.

So how does Jacobs plan to juggle his presidential duties with his other obligations? He doesn’t. Jacobs has decided it’s time to retire from his day job. Effective January 1, 2015, he will focus on his MMA position almost full time.

We asked Jacobs about his plans for the coming year.

What are your goals as MMA president for 2014?
I hope to meet with as many of Minnesota’s physicians as possible to engage them in a discussion about what we can and should do collectively to improve our profession and our ability to serve the health care needs of our communities. Physicians must understand and believe that our collective voice can make a difference.

What do you think are the biggest issues facing health care today?
There are so many that I won’t do justice to them with a short answer. But...
I would say that across health care we are being crushed by unreasonable administrative burdens that limit our ability to provide care at a reasonable cost. Those costs hurt our businesses and the very people we serve. Transformative change will require flexibility and nimbleness that are not easily achieved within the current system’s regulatory and payment structures.

How long have you been a member of the MMA and what have been some of the highlights?

I have been a member of the MMA and AMA on and off since I was a medical student representative to the AMA in 1973. I have participated steadily for the past 20 years and have been privileged to serve as a trustee and to work on special committees and task forces. Perhaps the highlight was getting to chair the Healthy Minnesota work that led to many of the reforms we have championed in Minnesota over the past six years. There is much left to do, but those efforts are great examples of the MMA’s importance as

News Briefs

Prior authorization group begins its work

The MMA has convened a 12-member task force that is taking an in-depth look at the prior authorization practices of Minnesota health plans and the state’s Medicaid program. The group began meeting in September.

The group will work to:
- understand the impact of prescription drug prior authorization on physicians and their practices
- understand the effect of prescription drug prior authorization practices on patients’ timely access to appropriate medications
- identify and recommend to the MMA Board of Trustees specific strategies for modifying the practice of prescription drug prior authorization in a way that improves patient care and reduces administration burdens for medical practices.

Work group members represent a variety of specialties and include: Alfred Anderson, M.D. (pain medicine); Vernon Berglund, M.D. (rheumatology); David Dorn, M.D. (neurology); David Einzig, M.D. (child psychiatry); Dean Gesme, M.D. (oncology); John Hitt, M.D. (internal medicine); Glenn Nemec, M.D. (family medicine); Randy Rice, M.D. (family medicine); Randy Saliares, M.D. (gastroenterology); George Schoephoerster, M.D. (geriatric medicine); Philip Stoltenberg, M.D. (gastroenterology); and Linda Van Etta, M.D. (infectious diseases).

Member hired to lead medical cannabis research

In October, the Minnesota Department of Health named MMA member Tom Arneson, M.D., as its lead research authority on medical cannabis.

Arneson, an internal medicine specialist, will manage the state’s medical cannabis patient registry and the program’s ongoing research efforts, and will serve as the department’s expert on the risks and benefits of medical cannabis, according the Minnesota Department of Health website.

A Mayo Medical School graduate, Arneson has been a researcher for the Department of Health, director of population health at Stratis Health and medical director for industry-sponsored research at the Chronic Disease Research Group.

Former MMA leader passes away

Long-time MMA leader Harold “Hal” Brunn passed away on September 23 at age 95. He worked with the MMA from 1951 to 1983.

“He used to say, frequently, that he worked with the most noble, caring individuals ever put on Earth and he was proud to be associated with them,” says George Lohmer, MMA CFO, who
a leader and a trusted voice in the efforts to improve health and health care in Minnesota.

**How do you plan to recruit new members?**
I believe the best strategy is to have honest conversations with as many physicians and groups as I can about what needs to be accomplished. I want to hear their concerns and priorities. In the long term, we need to build robust networks of communication to understand in an easy, effective and timely way the views and needs of our members.

**How long has the band HC/MC been around?**
I started the rock band with some Hennepin colleagues four and a half years ago. We continue to play for fundraisers and team-building events. It has helped us build community within our organization in a way that is fun and inclusive. I hope to continue to play with the band even as I retire from my day job. It is a welcome respite from our busy work schedules and a great team “sport.”

**Do you have a favorite guitar?**
The guitar of my dreams is one I used to own but sold to a nun while in medical school for $250. It was a beautiful 1968 vintage Rickenbacker 12-string electric (think of the sound of the Byrds). It would cost me about $5,000 to buy it back now. But I’m thinking about it. Each instrument has a very unique sound.

worked with Brunn from the late ’70s through Brunn’s retirement.

After graduating from the University of Minnesota, Brunn joined the Navy and attended Midshipmen School at Notre Dame. During his tenure with the Navy, he served under Admiral Chester Nimitz in Pearl Harbor. After World War II, he attended the University of Minnesota Law School.

He joined the MMA in 1951 as a lobbyist/associate director. After four years in that role, he became executive vice president, a position he held for 28 years.

**Advocacy All-Star program launched**

As part of its renewed commitment to physician grassroots advocacy, the MMA has launched the Advocacy All-Star program.

The program was created to recognize physicians who understand the importance of grassroots advocacy and are personally invested in bringing their expertise and personal experience to the legislative process.

By becoming an Advocacy All-Star, a physician commits to supporting the association’s advocacy efforts by responding to Action Alerts promptly, forming or strengthening relationships with their state legislators, making themselves available to lawmakers as resources, attending the MMA’s annual Day at the Capitol event, and becoming a MEDPAC member.

“Medicine has become increasingly political, and every year the future of the profession becomes more dependent on the decisions made by Congress, our state Legislature, and other regulatory and administrative agencies,” says Evelyn Clark, the MMA’s manager of grassroots and political engagement. “Unless physicians develop their political and legislative skills as constituents, control of the profession’s future will slowly slip out of medicine’s grasp.”

If you are interested in becoming an Advocacy All-Star or just want more information, contact Evelyn Clark (eclark@mnmed.org) or call 612-362-3739.

**Foundation honors five members with award, scholarships**

In September, the MMA Foundation (MMAF) presented its 2014 Medical Student Leadership Award to Rishi Kumar, M.D., M.B.A., M.H.A., and scholarships to four first-year University of Minnesota medical students.

Kumar is currently a resident at Hennepin County Medical Center. He has been part of the AMA’s Medical Student Section at Mayo Clinic and authored a resolution to give students health insurance for the time between graduating from medical school and beginning residency. He is also a member of the Zumbro Valley