News Briefs

Second survey shows physicians want more research on medical cannabis

Nearly half of Minnesota physicians who are not taking part in the state's medical cannabis program say it's because there's not enough scientific research to demonstrate the drug's benefit, the MMA found in a poll of physicians.

The email survey was sent June 30 to more than 14,000 physicians, both MMA members and nonmembers; more than 400 responded. The survey solicited physicians' reasons as to why they are or are not certifying patients for the state's medical cannabis program.

Along with the lack of scientific evidence, 25 percent of those surveyed said they would not participate until the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tests and approves it. Currently, medical cannabis is classified as a Schedule I drug, which means it has no medical benefit. Heroin and LSD are also Schedule I drugs.

Of the physicians who said they will take part in the program, the leading reasons include: having patients who are asking for medical cannabis, their belief that the drug does have medical value and the fact that the information gathered through the program will help the state better understand the drug's efficacy.

An earlier MMA survey (sent June 2) found a majority of Minnesota physicians were not planning to participate in the state's medical cannabis registry at the time. Of 457 respondents to that survey, 9 percent said they plan to participate, 68 percent said they do not, 17 percent said they hadn't decided and 7 percent noted that they don't have patients who have a qualifying condition.

MMA leader to take ACMC top post in January

MMA Immediate Past President Cindy Firkins Smith, MD, will become president and CEO of Willmar-based Affiliated Community Medical Centers (ACMC) on January 1, 2016.

Smith has practiced dermatology and dermatologic surgery at ACMC for 25 years and is a professor in the University of Minnesota’s department of dermatology. Last year, Gov. Mark Dayton appointed her to the Blue Ribbon Commission on the University of Minnesota Medical School. She recently was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award by her undergraduate alma mater, Minnesota State University, Mankato.

“I'm excited and honored about this new role,” Smith says. “ACMC’s physicians and staff have a long history of providing outstanding care to the people of west central and southwest Minnesota. It’s a privilege to continue that tradition.”

MMA works to address esthetician law

The MMA is working to fix legislation that would require physician clinics offering cosmetology, esthiology or nail services to obtain a salon license. The law was to take effect August 1. MMA representatives met with the Board of Cosmetologist Examiners and the Board of Medical Practice to ensure that services provided in a medical office can continue without the need for new licensure.

Annual Conference registration open


The conference will include:

• “Future of Medicine and the Physician’s Role in Innovation,” presented by Ian Morrison, PhD, an internationally known futurist, author, lecturer and consultant,

• “Scanning Tomorrow’s Technology,” presented by Kyra Bobinet, MD, MPH, researcher, behavior designer, innovator and entrepreneur, and


Additional educational programs include: “Motivational Interviewing,” “Using Patient and Team Communications to Improve Safety,” “Healing the Healer” and “Practice Tips to Reduce Burn-out.” For more information, call 612-362-3755.

On the calendar

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Healthiest State Summit</td>
<td>Aug. 6</td>
<td>University of Minnesota Continuing Education and Conference Center, St. Paul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preconference Hippocrates Cafe</td>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td>DoubleTree by Hilton, St. Louis Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015 Annual Conference</td>
<td>Sept. 25-26</td>
<td>DoubleTree by Hilton, St. Louis Park</td>
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Check the MMA’s website (www.mnmed.org/events) for more information and to register.
MMA members make an impact at AMA meeting
The MMA was well-represented at June’s AMA Annual Meeting in Chicago. Member Maya Babu, MD, won a second term on the Board of Trustees and member Steven Meister, MD, led a discussion on physician autonomy regarding the Avera Marshall Medical Center staff.

Babu and Meister were just two of many MMA members at the meeting. Others included: President Donald Jacobs, MD, Immediate Past President Cindy Firkins Smith, MD, Sally Trippel, MD, Will Nicholson, MD, Ray Christensen, MD, David Luehr, MD, Stephen Darrow, MD, Paul Matson, MD, Benjamin Whitten, MD, Dionne Hart, MD, Ken Crabb, MD, Blanton Bessinger, MD, Peter Amadio, MD, Eric Tangalo, MD, Laura Dean, MD, Gary Bryant, MD, Lyell Jones, MD, Daniel Brown, MD, and John Abenstein, MD. In addition, Sagar Chawla and Elizabeth Fracica attended as medical student delegates, and Kerri Chung, DO, went as the RFS delegate.

MMA staff attending included: CEO Robert Meiches, MD, Dave Renner, director of state and federal legislation, Janet Silversmith, director of health policy, and Teresa Knoedler, JD, policy counsel.

Renner gave a presentation on the MMA’s prior authorization reform efforts.

Opioids seminars scheduled for Mankato, Duluth
The MMA will host two free REMS (risk evaluation and mitigation strategy) seminars on opioids for physicians who prescribe extended-release and long-acting opioid medications.

The first event will take place August 13 at the Courtyard by Marriott in Mankato; the second will take place October 1 at the Black Woods Banquet Center in Duluth. Both events will take place from 5:30 to 8 p.m. and will feature food and a cash bar. This activity has been approved for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™. Both seminars will be led by MMA member Charles Reznikoff, MD, an addiction medicine specialist. Visit the events section on the MMA website for more information.

Physicians could get reimbursed for talking about end-of-life with Medicare patients
In early July, the federal government proposed paying physicians, nurse practitioners and other health-care providers for discussing end-of-life care with their Medicare patients. The proposed rule would build on the current Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ payment to physicians for advance care planning discussions that occur during a patient’s annual wellness visit. This new proposal would allow reimbursement for advance care planning consultations regardless of when they occur.

MMA in Action
MMA President Donald Jacobs, MD, met with new Interim Fairview Chief Medical Officer, Lisbeth Thomas, MD. He also met with Minnesota Hospital Association Medical Director Rahul Koranne, MD, Jacobs, Robert Meiches, MD, MMA CEO, and Kathleen Baumbach, manager of physician outreach, also met the physician members of Ear, Nose and Throat Specialty Care of Minnesota.

Immediate Past President Cindy Firkins Smith, MD, Meiches and Baumbach met with leaders at Hutchinson Health in late June.

Meiches, Trustee Marilyn Peitso, MD, and Mandy Rubenstein, manager of physician outreach, met with CentraCare CEO Ken Holmen, MD, in June.

Meiches, Dave Renner, director of state and federal legislation, Eric Dick, manager of state legislative affairs, Juliana Milhofer, MMA policy analyst, Teresa Knoedler, JD, MMA policy counsel, and Janet Silversmith, director of health policy, met with staff from the Minnesota Hospital Association in June to discuss post-legislative topics, including the all-payer claims database, the new Health Care Financing Task Force, telemedicine, the interstate licensure compact, medical cannabis and prior authorization.

Dick also traveled to Sanford Health’s Bemidji Clinic in July to present a review of the 2015 legislative session and field questions about the state’s medical cannabis program.

In late June, Rubenstein attended the Minnesota Rural Health Conference in Duluth.

In late July, Dennis Kelly, MMA Foundation CEO, met with the leadership of Westside Community Health Services in St. Paul to discuss the Foundation’s Physician Volunteerism Program.