News Briefs

More than 115 physicians, physicians-in-training and other health care workers attended (either in person or via livestreaming) a March 31 educational event on Minnesota’s medical cannabis law at the University of Minnesota. The event, “Cannabis Conversation,” was co-sponsored by the MMA and the Minnesota Department of Health’s Office of Medical Cannabis.

The program, which featured three physicians at the forefront of the state’s efforts, was designed to help physicians prepare for the legalization of medical cannabis this summer. Starting July 1, patients who are certified to have one of nine conditions will be able to purchase medical cannabis from state-approved distribution centers.

“Minnesota’s program is distinctive,” Tom Arneson, MD, research manager of the Office of Medical Cannabis told the audience. “It doesn’t allow smokable or whole-plant marijuana—only liquids, oils, tinctures or vaporized forms; there’s also a commitment to learning from the experience through a registry, reports and observation program.”

Because it is a Schedule 1 drug, cannabis cannot be prescribed. In some states where medical cannabis has been legalized, physicians must make an assertion that patients may benefit from it in order for the patient to access the drug. However, in Minnesota, the role of physicians (and physician assistants and advanced practice registered nurses) is only to certify that a patient has one of the qualifying conditions.

“The law doesn’t say physicians can’t talk to patients about the types of cannabis and the benefits and risk. But it says their only formal role is to certify that a patient has a certain disease or disability,” Arneson said. Pharmacists at the eight distribution centers in the state will work with patients to determine which products and doses to try for their condition.

In addition to Arneson’s presentation, Kyle Kingsley, MD, founder of Minnesota Medical Solutions, and Andrew Bachman, MD, founder of LeafLine Labs, the two manufacturing and distribution companies in the state, described their operations and processes.

Tax scammers prey on Minnesota physicians again
For the second year in a row, tax scammers are targeting physicians.

Reports of fraudulent federal income tax returns being filed using physician names, addresses and Social Security numbers have been made in Minnesota and other states. Victims have been unable to file their taxes electronically because a return has already been filed.

If you have been a victim of this scam, you can find help on the IRS website or by calling 800-908-4490.

Futurist to speak at 2015 Annual Conference
Futurist Ian Morrison is the first speaker to sign on for this year’s Annual Conference, which takes place September 25-26 at the DoubleTree by Hilton in St. Louis Park. Morrison is an internationally known author, consultant and futurist who specializes in long-term forecasting with a particular emphasis on health care and the changing business environment. He has worked with more than 100 Fortune 500 companies. Recent clients include Mayo Clinic and Kaiser Permanente. Morrison is the author of Leading Change in Health Care: Building a Viable System for Today

At the Capitol

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<tr>
<th>MMA Legislative Priority</th>
<th>Status at the Capitol</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prior authorization</td>
<td>Bills have been introduced in both the Senate (SF 934) and the House (HF 1060). SF 934 has made it through the committee process, but HF 1060 has not moved. The bill could be included in omnibus bill.</td>
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<td>Reinstall Medicaid payments</td>
<td>Bills (SF 1576 and HF 1729) have been introduced and are working their way through the Capitol.</td>
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<td>Primary care loan forgiveness</td>
<td>Bills (SF 3 and HF 211) have been introduced and are working their way through the Capitol.</td>
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<td>Interstate licensure</td>
<td>Bills (SF 253 and HF 321) have been introduced and are progressing through the Capitol.</td>
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<td>Reducing nicotine’s harm</td>
<td>A House bill (HF 1253) that would place more restrictions on e-cigarettes was introduced in early March. It doesn’t appear that it will move this session.</td>
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<td>Provider tax repeal</td>
<td>No legislation has been proposed so far that would derail the scheduled repeal.</td>
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MMA in Action

MMA President Donald Jacobs, MD, and MMA CEO Robert Meiches, MD, met with the new CentraCare CEO Kenneth Holmen, MD, in mid-April. Kathleen Baumbach and Brian Strub, managers of physician outreach, attended the 2015 Match Day program at the University of Minnesota Medical School, Twin Cities campus, in March.

In late March, Strub participated in career day at the Hmong College Prep Academy in St Paul. He shared information on the MMA’s medical student section and discussed the training required to become a physician.

The MMA’s Medical Student Section presented “Working Effectively with Medical Interpreters” to students at the University of Minnesota Medical School, Duluth campus in mid-April.

Strub, Baumbach, Terry Ruane, MMA director of membership, marketing and communications, Mandy Rubenstein, manager of physician outreach, Barbara Daiker, MMA manager of quality, Evelyn Clark, MMA manager of grass roots and political engagement, and Juliana Milhofer, MMA policy analyst, attended the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians’ 2015 Spring Refresher conference in Minneapolis April 16–17.

Daiker also served as co-chair of the Minnesota Department of Health’s Committee on Healthcare Information Exchange, which held a joint meeting with the Standards and Interoperability Committee in March.

In mid-March, Dave Renner, CAE, MMA director of state and federal legislation, gave a legislative update for OB/GYN physicians in Edina.

Jaime Olson, MMA manager of CME, Ruane and Baumbach attended a workshop, “ER/LA Opioid REMS: Achieving Safe Use While Improving Patient Care,” in Hutchinson in early April.

Social event planned for Rochester-area physicians

The MMA, Zumbro Valley Medical Society (ZVMS), MMA Young Physician Section and MMA Medical Student Section are hosting a free social event for Rochester-area physicians and physicians-in-training from 5 to 8 p.m. on May 7 at the Cambria Gallery on 400 South Broadway in Rochester. The event is a celebration of medicine, a thank you to members and a welcome to new and prospective members. Hors d’œuvres and drinks will be served. To register, visit www.mnmed.org/RochesterSocial. Sponsors include the US Air Force, US Army, Limb Lab, Cambria, Clements and Home Federal.

On the calendar

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Preconference Hippocrates Café</td>
<td>Sept. 24</td>
<td>DoubleTree by Hilton, St. Louis Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>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 leadership nominations due May 16

The MMA is now accepting nominations for its 2015-16 memberwide election. Nominations for leadership positions from members and component medical societies will be accepted through May 16. The open offices include: president-elect, two MMA Board of Trustees positions, three AMA delegate positions and one AMA alternate delegate position. The nominees for the MMA Board of Trustees must be members from the Northeast and Southwest Trustee districts (one will be elected from each district). The nominating committee will meet in late May and July to recommend a slate of candidates for each position. Ballots will be electronically distributed on August 11 to all members who have provided the MMA with an email address. The election will be open for 30 days. Results will be announced before or at the MMA Annual Conference. If you are interested in submitting a nomination or have questions, please contact George Lohmer at glohmer@mnmed.org or 612-362-3746.