Prescription opioids summit draws huge crowd
More than 1,200 people learned that prescription opioid abuse, addiction and diversion have reached a crisis level in the United States at a day-long seminar in late August at the University of Minnesota. The event was co-sponsored by the MMA and included several MMA members as panelists.

MMA members taking part included:
- Charlie Reznikoff, MD, who promoted the MMA’s “Pain, Opioid, and Addiction Lecture Series” as part of his presentation. Reznikoff and a multidisciplinary team that includes pain specialists, psychologists, addiction counselors, pharmacists and physical therapists provide care for opioid-dependent patients through an addiction medicine program at Hennepin County Medical Center.
- Chris Johnson, MD, an emergency medicine specialist, provided an overview of the prescription opioid abuse problem in Minnesota and suggested that a societal response is needed. He also noted that medical schools don’t teach physicians about pain and addiction.
- W. Michael Hooten, MD, from Mayo Clinic, noted that not all patients who are exposed to prescription opioids become addicted or overdose. There are certain risk factors for adverse outcomes that need to be factored in such as age, gender, history of addiction or substance abuse, and psychiatric comorbidities.
- Marvin Seppala, MD, chief medical officer with the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, pointed out that although effective treatment exists, many people don’t access it.

Independent physician education event planned for November
Physicians can learn new strategies to improve efficiency and expand patient access at a special event co-sponsored by the MMA and the AMA. “Transforming Your Practice to Regain the Joy of Medicine” will be held November 11 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Continuing Education and Conference Center on the University of Minnesota, St. Paul campus. The program will be webcast to reach physicians throughout Minnesota. For details, go to www.mnmed.org/IPevent.

MMA health disparities work group begins work
A 16-member MMA Health Disparities Work Group, formed to address health disparities between racial and ethnic groups in Minnesota, began meeting in late August. Chaired by Fatima Jiwa, MBChB, the work group will meet for approximately 12 months. Its purpose is to:
- Understand the various drivers behind racial and ethnic disparities in health care,
- Guide the identification and development of information, tools and resources to support physicians and
- Examine other roles the MMA could play in assisting physicians as they combat racial and ethnic health disparities in their practices

Along with Jiwa, work group members include: LaPrincess C. Brewer, MD, MPH; Demeka Y. Campbell, MD; Brooke Cunningham, MD, PhD; Brooke Dugdale (medical student); Deenah Farrell (medical student); Dionne Hart, MD, FAPA; Alice Lehman (medical student); Tamiko Morgan, MD; Stephen C. Nelson, MD; Michael Pitt, MD, FAAP; Chris Reif, MD, MPH; Laurel Ries, MD; Daniel Riley, MD; Maria Veronica Svetaz, MD, MPH, FSAHM, FAAFP; and Steve Vincent, MD.
Stearns Benton holds another successful drug take-back event

In mid-August, the Stearns Benton Medical Society (SBMS) held another successful drug take-back event as part of a senior expo in St. Cloud. Physician volunteers worked with local law enforcement officers to dispose of unwanted medications. “Our goal is to get unwanted drugs out of citizens’ cabinets,” says SBMS President Patrick Zook, MD. “We don’t want these medicines falling into the wrong hands.” This is the second year SBMS has participated in the expo, which attracts thousands of attendees from the St. Cloud area.

Survey: Patients pleased with care

For the most part, Minnesotans are pleased with the health care they are receiving, according to a survey released in late August by MN Community Measurement and the Minnesota Department of Health. The 2015 Patient Experience of Care Survey includes results for more than 200,000 patients at 765 clinics in Minnesota and neighboring communities in Iowa, North Dakota and Wisconsin. Nearly 80 percent of Minnesota’s patients give their health care providers a rating of 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale (10 being the highest rating), but only about 60 percent of patients said they experienced such satisfaction with their access to care.

The survey, which included patients who had appointments between September 1 and November 30, 2014, measured opinions on whether they felt they were:
- Getting care when needed
- Being listened to and receiving information and instructions that are easy to understand
- Being treated in a courteous and helpful manner by office staff
- Satisfied with their provider.

Minnesotans named to “Influential People in Healthcare” list

Four Minnesotans are included in Modern Healthcare’s 100 Most Influential People in Healthcare for 2015. They are Stephen Hemsley, president and CEO of UnitedHealth Group (ranked No. 5), John Noseworthy, MD, president and CEO of Mayo Clinic (No. 8), Omar Ishrak, chairman and CEO of Medtronic (No. 46), and Mary Brainerd, president and CEO of HealthPartners (No. 94).

Physicians encouraged to attend intractable pain, medical cannabis meetings

State law mandates that by January 1, 2016, Health Commissioner Ed Ehlinger, MD, MSPH, must provide the Legislature with a recommendation on whether to include intractable pain as one of the qualifying conditions for patients to be eligible for medical cannabis. In an effort to hear from constituents across the state, the Office of Medical Cannabis is convening a series of community meetings through October 27. The MMA encourages physicians to attend and provide their opinions on the issue. For more information visit www.health.state.mn.us/news/pressrel/2015/cannabis082115.html.