VIEWPOINT

New beginnings

When we first set out on the path of examining and ultimately changing how we govern the MMA, no one really knew how things would turn out. We had our hunches. We talked with other state associations to see what they’ve experienced. And we consulted with change-management experts. But there was always the question “What if this doesn’t work?” hanging over us.

We have now returned from the first annual get-together without the House of Delegates and I’d have to say, based on the turnout and the diversity of attendees, the prognosis for our future looks pretty good. This year’s Annual Conference was open to all physicians, not just MMA members who are delegates. We filled the schedule with interesting national and local speakers, spirited policy discussions and informative educational programming. And our members reacted positively to the changes. We had a nearly 50 percent increase in attendance this year. I saw a lot of new, smiling faces.

“The main reason we wanted to change was to create something that would light a fire under the physicians in this state, to find a way to get more people involved,” Cindy Firkins Smith, M.D., our outgoing MMA president was quoted as saying in a Minnesota Medicine article in the September issue, which examined organized medicine in-depth. “The system we had before wasn’t conducive to easy participation.”

“Easy participation” is key because, as you know, physicians are swamped. It is often difficult to fit in MMA involvement with work and home life.

But we have to get involved if we want to make a difference. We can’t let nonphysicians make decisions for us.

We need to be part of a larger whole and go above and beyond our daily work. That means getting involved in groups like the MMA, your local component medical society and your specialty society.

The MMA will continue to adapt in order to better serve the physicians of Minnesota. We will create tactics that allow us to reach our diverse membership where they work and live. We will continue to hold policy forums and listening sessions throughout the year and throughout the state. These events, along with the reinvigorated Annual Conference, are attracting physicians who have shied away from the MMA in the past.

We believe our new strategy for engaging more physicians is off to a great start. But we have a long way to go before we’re satisfied.