These are indeed interesting times

There's an old English expression, “May you live in interesting times,” that comes to mind when I think of the last 12 months as the MMA’s president. The saying has been attributed to a Chinese curse, and it was mentioned by President Kennedy in a speech. I’m not sure whether it’s actually Chinese, but it sure is fitting to describe the last year, especially when it comes to health care.

This past summer, we watched closely as Congress tried to push through ACA repeal-and-replace legislation that could have left millions of Americans—including thousands of Minnesotans—without health insurance coverage. First, the effort appeared dead; then it was alive; then it was dead again. Fortunately, the poorly written legislation didn’t garner the necessary votes to become law.

We do need to revise health care legislation, but it needs to be done on a bipartisan basis and truly be beneficial for as many Americans as possible.

On a local level, the MMA’s state legislative priorities moved ahead, though not necessarily at the pace we’d like. We were able to maintain the repeal of the provider tax, and we made progress in the fight against the opioid epidemic. Our medication prior-authorization legislation continued to enjoy support in the Senate, and it finally received a hearing in the House at the end of the session. It’s slight progress, but progress nonetheless.

Another highlight this year was the MMA’s preceptor initiative. In May, we honored two Minnesota physicians for their preceptor work at the University of Minnesota Medical School’s Dean’s Tribute to Excellence in Education event. Meanwhile, we continue to promote to our members the importance of serving as a preceptor.

Speaking of education, we continued to expand our online Pain, Opioids and Addiction Lecture Series, which we have organized with the Steve Rummler HOPE Network and the University of Minnesota Medical School. We are taking on the opioid epidemic on several fronts, and our lecture series is educating providers around the world.

At this year’s Annual Conference, I will pass the presidential reins to George Schoephoerster, MD. I’m confident he will enjoy great success next year. As I did, he will benefit from the assistance of the MMA staff. They do great work on behalf of Minnesota’s physicians and physicians-in-training. I’d also like to acknowledge two long-term staff members who are moving on: CEO Robert Meiches, MD, is moving on to other pursuits, and George Lohmer, director of business development and CFO, has decided to retire after 39 years at the association.

With their departures, the MMA will have completely new leadership. We now have the opportunity to help shape health care in the state in the years to come. If you are not a member, please join and help us shape that future. If you are a member, please get engaged. We are stronger together, and you can bet our “interesting times” will surely continue.

David Agerter, MD
MMA President