A wave of white coats at the Capitol

More than 160 physicians and physicians-in-training gathered for MMA's annual Day at the Capitol on February 13 to meet with legislators and discuss MMA's top legislative priorities: preserving patient access to prescription drugs; replacing the provider tax and ensuring stable, ongoing funding for access and safety net programs; reducing the harm of opioids; modernizing the Minnesota Health Records Act; and working to prevent gun violence.

The event was the largest Day at the Capitol in more than 25 years.

Before meeting with legislators, attendees heard comments from Sen. Jim Abeler (R-Anoka), who is carrying the MMA's legislation on the claims expenditure assessment, the provider tax replacement. He said his bill's path will be difficult, noting that the Democrats appear to be intent on repealing the repeal and Republicans are determined to make sure the provider tax sunsets. While the alternative proposal faces a challenging path, he noted that the MMA's proposal may become an important part of end-of-session negotiations as the Legislature approaches the constitutionally mandated end of session on May 21.

Like the MMA, Abeler said he and other legislators support the programs funded by the provider tax, although many disagree with the existing funding mechanism.

He thanked the MMA for developing an alternative plan.

Following Abeler’s remarks, physicians and medical trainees met with their individual legislators and then finished the day with a reception at the Commodore Bar & Restaurant in St. Paul.
Bridget Keller, MD, (left) and Kristin Lyerly, MD, enjoy a spirited conversation.

Sen. Julie Rosen greets her constituent, Amrit Singh, MBBS.

Plenty of tweeting occurred, thanks to the large group of medical students in attendance.

Joel Greenwald, MD, (left); Caleb Schultz, MD; Jennifer Kuyava, MD; and Jeremy Springer, MD, meet with Sen. Steve Cwodzinski.
News Briefs

Engaged crowd gathers to learn about gun violence prevention
Nearly 100 physicians and physicians-in-training gathered in St. Paul in late January to discuss how doctors might better address the gun violence public health crisis.

Panelists—including a University of Minnesota professor and epidemiologist, an emergency department physician and a senator/hospitalist—discussed the lack of gun research that is currently available, how technology could make firearm ownership much safer and the stigma about seeking mental health, among other topics.

In March 2018, the MMA released a statement calling on lawmakers to pass more common-sense laws to address this public health crisis. The discussion on gun violence prevention continued throughout the year, including several policies presented at the 2018 MMA Annual Conference. Each was adopted, eventually, by the MMA Board of Trustees.

In November 2018, the National Rifle Association reacted to a new gun violence study in Annals of Internal Medicine, tweeting that physicians pushing for gun control should “stay in their lane.” This led to significant push-back by physicians on social media and to the creation of #ThisIsOurLane and #ThisIsMyLane.

“I’ve never been more proud of the doctors of the MMA than when they came out with that statement (on common-sense laws),” said panelist Sen. Matt Klein, MD. Klein told the group that he is actively supporting legislation on expanding criminal background checks to include private sales such as at gun shows or online and adopting a “red flag” law that would allow relatives and law enforcement to ask a judge to take firearms away from individuals who are deemed to be a serious threat to others or themselves.

The workshop grew out of this heightened passion for preventing gun violence.

Panelist Marizen Ramirez, MPH, PhD, associate professor, Division of Environmental Health Sciences, School of Public Health, University of Minnesota, made the case that more studies are needed to help with preventive solutions. Until it was altered in 2018, the Dickey Amendment made it difficult for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to secure funding to study firearm violence.

Carolyn McClain, MD, another panelist and MMA board member, echoed Ramirez’s call for more research. She also shared gut-wrenching stories she heard at a physician conference in Florida, a state that has been greatly affected by gun violence in recent years.

Attendees at the workshop participated in table discussions on a variety of topics, including: how to discuss gun violence prevention with patients; how to talk to legislators about gun violence prevention; how physicians can prevent gun violence; and myths about gun violence and mental health.

Partners in the workshop included: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; HealthPartners; Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians; Minnesota Chapter, American College of Physicians; Minnesota Medical Association Foundation; Minnesota Psychiatry Society; Twin Cities Medical Society; and Zumbro Valley Medical Society.

On the calendar

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<td>2019 Annual Conference</td>
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MMA forming book club with several author events this year
To celebrate the arts and humanity of medicine, the MMA is organizing a book club for the state’s physicians and physicians-in-training.
MMA staff is currently organizing up to four events with authors this year. The events will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on a weeknight in a metro-area location, with podcast-style recordings of the events to be available to those unable to attend.

“We are continually looking for ways to engage current and future members,” says Janet Silversmith, MMA CEO. “Recent research has found that reading for pleasure reduces physician burnout by improving empathy and combating depersonalization.”

Stay tuned to MMA News Now, the MMA’s weekly e-newsletter, for future details.

Nominations for MMA officers now open

The MMA is now accepting nominations for 2019-2020 leadership positions for president-elect, trustees and the AMA delegation. A copy of the job descriptions and preferred skills/attributes can be found at: www.mnmed.org/MMA/media/Hidden-Documents/MMA-Leadership-Job-Descriptions-2019.pdf.

Please send any nominations you have to Shari Nelson (snelson@mnmed.org) by May 31.

The MMA Nominating Committee will review nominations and propose a slate of candidates for the member-wide election, which will begin in August and close 30 days later.

Nominate a peer for one of MMA’s awards

Members are encouraged to nominate their peers, medical students and advocacy champions for one of MMA’s four annual awards. Visit the MMA website (www.mnmed.org/about-us/MMA-Awards) to make a nomination by June 28.

Award categories include:

- **Distinguished Service Award.** Given to a physician who has made outstanding contributions in service to the MMA and on behalf of medicine and the physicians of Minnesota during his or her career.

- **President’s Award.** Designated for individuals who have made outstanding contributions in service to the goals of the MMA.

- **Medical Student Leadership Award.** Presented to a member of the MMA Medical Student Section who demonstrates outstanding commitment to the medical profession.

**James H. Sova Memorial Award for Advocacy.** Given to a person who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of public policy, medical sciences, medical education, medical care or the socio-economics of medical practice. Sova was the chief lobbyist for the MMA from 1968 until the time of his death at the AMA meeting in December 1981.

Awards will be given out at this year’s Annual Conference, September 20-21 in Duluth.

MN Community Measurement releases study on preventive health services

In early February, MN Community Measurement (MNCM) released a report highlighting quality measures for preventive health services in Minnesota, including information on cancer screening, infectious disease screening and vaccinations for children and adolescents.

The report, “2018 Preventive Health Measures,” presents data collected by MNCM in 2018, including an online appendix with comparisons by medical group and clinic.

The report’s key findings include:

- **Childhood and Adolescent Immunizations.** Both immunization measures are improving and show statistically significant increases in statewide rates compared to last year. The statewide rate for the Childhood Immunization Status (Combo 10) measure is 60 percent, a 6-percentage-point increase compared to 2017. The statewide rate for the new version of the adolescent immunization measure, now including the HPV vaccine, is 26 percent. The statewide rate improved by 11 percentage points compared to 2017.

- **Colorectal Cancer Screening.** Although there was a decrease in the statewide colorectal cancer screening rate, this was due, at least in part, to changes to the denominator that were made to align with the national measure. The changes removed relevant preventive service codes, reducing the size of the total population included in the measure. The screening measure uses data from clinics, which enables reporting of results by geography, age, gender, race, Hispanic ethnicity, language and country of origin. Screening rates are significantly higher for patients who live in metro areas, are age 60 and older and/or are female. Notably, colorectal cancer screening rates for all populations of color are significantly below the statewide average.

- **Variation in Medical Group Performance.** There is significant variation in medical group performance for all preventive health screening measures analyzed, but several medical groups and clinics are achieving noteworthy results for many of the measures. There were eight primary care or multi-specialty medical groups with rates significantly above the statewide average on at least 50 percent of the preventive health measures for which they were eligible. Seventeen primary care clinics received a top rating on the Colorectal Cancer Screening measure, after adjustment for different patient risk factors.

For more information, visit the MNCM website at www.MNCM.org.
Twin Cities Medical Society and its foundation hands out three awards

Three local physicians were recognized for their outstanding work by the Twin Cities Medical Society (TCMS) and its foundation.

Macaran Baird, MD, received the 2018 Shotwell Award in January. Chris Johnson, MD, chair of the TCMS Foundation, presented the award to Baird at the annual meeting of the Abbott Northwestern Medical Staff. Before he retired in December 2017, Baird served as professor and head of the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

The Shotwell Award is presented annually to a person within the state of Minnesota who has made significant contributions in the field of health care. It was established by Metropolitan Medical Center in 1971 in recognition of the support and dedication of the Shotwell Family. Upon the closing of Metropolitan-Mount Sinai Medical Center in 1991, the West Metro Medical Society/Foundation assumed responsibility for selecting the recipient of the Shotwell Award. Abbott Northwestern Hospital and Medical Staff has generously provided funding for the award since 2003.

Nancy Guttormson, MD, was awarded the 2018 TCMS’s First a Physician Award.

The award was established in 2007 by TCMS to recognize a member who selflessly gives of his/her time and energy to improve the health of their patients, has made a positive impact on organized medicine and the medical community’s ability to practice medicine and/or has been instrumental in improving the lives of others in the community.

Guttormson is recognized by her colleagues at Fairview Ridges Hospital as a highly skilled head and neck endocrine surgeon, as well as a breast surgeon. She is also a respected leader and teacher. She is credited with pioneering the thyroid cancer program and helping establish the Breast Center at Fairview Ridges Hospital, as well as a multidisciplinary tumor board.

In mid-January, the Twin Cities Medical Society Foundation (TCMSF) awarded Ann Lowry, MD, a colon and rectal surgeon, and partner at Colon and Rectal Surgery Associates, Ltd., its Charles Bolles Bolles-Rogers Award.

The award is given to a physician who, in the opinion of the members of the TCMSF selection committee, is the outstanding physician of this and other years for his/her contribution to medical research, achievement or leadership.

The award is named after Charles Bolles Bolles-Rogers, who lived in the Minneapolis area for 37 years and was especially interested in the health and hospital needs of the city. He served on the (former) St. Barnabas Hospital Board of Trustees and was president of that board for many years.

Lowry is known for her leadership and surgical excellence within the local, national, and global medical communities. In 1987, she became a partner of Colon and Rectal Surgery Associates, and was named its chief executive officer and president in 2008. Lowry also holds leadership roles at the University of Minnesota, Minnesota Endoscopy Center and Fairview Health System. In 1997, she was named director of the Colon and Rectal Surgery Residency and Fellowship program. She attained the rank of full clinical professor in 2002. Lowry was elected as the first female physician president of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons in 2005.

MMA to host six social gatherings for physicians, physicians-in-training in 2019

The MMA will host six Doctors’ Lounges throughout the state this year. The free, social gatherings will take place:
- April 25: St. Cloud
- May 9: Rochester
- May 21: Twin Cities
- Sept. 18: Duluth
- Oct. 1: Mankato
- Oct. 24: Edina

Since 2015, the MMA has hosted these free events that feature food and beverages. It’s a great opportunity for physicians, residents and medical students to get together casually and network. Significant others and children are welcome, too. It’s a celebration of medicine, a thank you to members, and a welcome to new and prospective members. Each Doctors’ Lounge will also include an informal discussion on timely topics for the practice of medicine in Minnesota.

Stay tuned to MMA News Now, the MMA’s weekly e-newsletter, for details as each Doctors’ Lounge approaches.

City and county support of T-21 continues to increase

The Duluth City Council voted in late January to raise the minimum age for tobacco sales to 21. The MMA sent a letter to the Council supporting the ordinance, which makes Duluth the 20th city in Minnesota to pass T-21. The other municipalities with T-21 ordinances are: Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Eden Prairie, Edina, Excelsior, Falcon Heights, Hermantown, Lauderdale, Mendota Heights, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, North Mankato, Plymouth, Richfield, Roseville, Shoreview, St. Louis Park, St. Peter and Waseca. Counties include Beltrami, Pope and Otter Tail.
MMA in Action

In December, MMA CEO Janet Silversmith, Dave Renner, director of advocacy, Eric Dick, manager of state legislative affairs, and Becca Branum, policy counsel, met with Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Commissioner Jan Malcolm and other MDH leadership to discuss MMA’s provider tax alternative proposal. They also meet with staff from the Department of Human Services and the Department of Revenue in January to discuss the provider tax alternative proposal.

Silversmith also presented the alternative to the MMGMA Governance Affairs Committee. Renner, Dick and Silversmith discussed the proposal with the MN Council of Health Plans. Renner and Silversmith met with members of Doctors for Health Equity to discuss the provider tax alternative proposal.

MMA President Doug Wood, MD, Silversmith, Renner and Dan Hauser, director of communications, education and events, met with members of the Minneapolis Star Tribune editorial panel to discuss the provider tax alternative proposal in December.

Dick joined the Minnesota Epilepsy Foundation’s Professional Advisory Board for its February meeting, where he spoke with the group about the MMA’s legislative agenda, including its efforts to protect patients from mid-year formulary changes that risk a patient’s health.

Wood served as host at the MMA’s Gun Violence Prevention Workshop in January and Day at the Capitol in February. Scott Wilson, manager of member outreach, made presentations to the Physician Advocacy Network at HealthPartners in Arden Hills and the St. Joseph’s Family Medicine Residency Program. He also took part in a Resident/Fellows Section meeting at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester.

The MMA’s George Lohmer, Jon Stensland, director of Finance & IT and CFO, and Silversmith met in January with leadership from COPIC to kick off its new partnership.

Members of the MMA Executive Committee and Silversmith met in late January with leadership from ICSI (Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement) including recently named president and CEO Claire Neely, MD, to discuss current activities and opportunities for partnership.

Silversmith participated in the MN Alliance for Patient Safety (MAPS) board meeting in January. Silversmith is serving as the MAPS treasurer for 2019.

Silversmith met with MN Community Measurement Leadership in early February to discuss upcoming MNCM projects and legislative issues.

Renner and Silversmith met with Randy Kelly (former St. Paul mayor) and Brian O’Shea from Synergetic Endeavors in early February; they have been retained by “Partnership for America’s Health Care Future” to generate public awareness/discussion about “Medicare for All” proposals. The Partnership is a collaboration that includes AMA, PhRMA, AHIP, BCBS, and others.

Minnesota descends in country’s health rankings

Minnesotans were less healthy in 2018, according to America’s Health Rankings Annual Report, from the United Health Foundation. Minnesota now ranks seventh overall in terms of the healthiest states in the nation. Last year, Minnesota ranked sixth, and fourth in 2016. The report noted Minnesota’s strengths as:

- Low cardiovascular death rate.
- Low percentage of uninsured population.
- Low prevalence of frequent mental distress.

The state’s challenges included:

- Low immunization coverage among children.
- High prevalence of excessive drinking.
- High incidence of pertussis.

For nearly 30 years, America’s Health Rankings has provided an analysis of national health on a state-by-state basis by evaluating a historical and comprehensive set of health, environmental and socioeconomic data to determine national health benchmarks and state rankings. Hawaii received the top ranking for 2018. Massachusetts was second and Connecticut third. Louisiana ranked last.