Early 120 physicians and physicians-in-training gathered at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center in September to discuss the state of health care access in Minnesota, inaugurate their new president and hear Gov. Tim Walz’s assessment of the medical industry.

In his closing speech, Walz told attendees that he plans to “lean in” on the association’s efforts to improve vaccination rates in Minnesota.

“The immunization issue—we have got to do better,” Walz said. “I am going to ask and look for your help. I’m going to lean in a little bit more with the authority and things we have to make sure for all the right reasons, the science that makes things work, the herd immunity issue. I’ve got a 12-year-old in public school and I’m not going to tell you that there’s not some self-interest in me. I don’t want unvaccinated people putting him at risk at where he can be. Your voice speaks a lot louder than mine on these issues.”

Walz covered several health-care issues in his 15-minute address, including the current work at the Capitol regarding emergency insulin supplies. He expressed his frustration with the pharmaceutical industry and said he hopes he can work with physicians to make the necessary changes to improve health care in Minnesota.

He also touched upon advance directives, the provider tax, a public option and health care as a “basic human right.”

The conference also included the MMA annual awards, a medical student/resident/fellow poster symposium and hours of engaging discussions on a variety of timely topics.

**New officers**

Keith Stelter, MD, a family physician in Mankato, was inaugurated as the 153rd president of the MMA. Other MMA officers for 2019 include Marilyn Peitso, MD, a pediatrician in St. Cloud, as president-elect. Doug Wood, MD, a cardiologist in Rochester, assumed the role of immediate past president. Edwin Bogonko, MD, a hospitalist in Shakopee, continues as secretary/treasurer. Randy Rice, MD, a family physician in Moose Lake, continues as board chair.

**Other elected officers:**

- Dionne Hart, MD, a psychiatrist in Rochester, was re-elected as an MMA trustee.
- Abigail Ring, MD, a family physician in Detroit Lakes, was re-elected as an MMA trustee.
- Rebecca Thomas, MD, MHS, an oncologist in Maple Grove, was newly elected as a trustee.
- Kimberly Tjaden, MD, MPH, a family physician in St. Cloud, was newly elected as a trustee.
- David Estrin, MD, a pediatrician in Plymouth, was re-elected as an AMA delegate.
- Former MMA president David Thorson, MD, a family physician in White Bear Lake and current AMA alternate delegate, was elected to serve as an AMA delegate.
- Ashok Patel, MD, a pulmonologist at Mayo Clinic, was newly elected to serve as an AMA alternate delegate.

All MMA terms begin immediately following the Annual Conference; AMA delegation terms begin January 1, 2020.

**MMA Awards**

Five MMA members were honored with MMA Awards, which are given each year to those in medicine who go above and beyond.

**Distinguished Service Award**

Former MMA President Donald Jacobs, MD, received the MMA’s highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award, for his years of service to the association and to medicine.

Now retired, Jacobs served as president in 2014. Before retiring, Jacobs was chief of clinical operations for Hennepin HealthCare System in Minneapolis. He was CEO and chair of Hennepin...
Faculty Associates for 12 years before its integration with Hennepin County Medical Center in 2012.

He practiced general surgery in the Twin Cities for more than 30 years and served as surgery department chair and residency program director at Hennepin. From 2006 to 2010, he chaired Healthy Minnesota and served on the Minnesota Healthcare Access Commission and the Health Care Reform Review Council on behalf of the MMA.

President’s Awards
Kathryn Duevel, MD, and George Lohmer received the MMA’s President’s Award, which recognizes those who have given much of his or her free time to help improve the association.

Duevel currently serves as medical director of quality and innovation at Carris Health in Willmar. She has been active in fighting opioid abuse in central Minnesota and she served on the first board of MNsure.

Lohmer, recently retired from the MMA, has been an advocate for Minnesota physicians for four decades. He is one of the longest serving staff members of the MMA, having served 43 years.

Medical Student Leadership Award
Fourth-year medical student Tom Schmidt received the MMA’s Student Leadership Award, which recognizes medical students who demonstrate exemplary leadership in service to fellow medical students, the profession of medicine and the broader community.

Schmidt is co-chair of the Medical Student Section (MSS) Executive Committee. He has also been active with Hands On Advocacy, a student-created, student-led experiential learning project started by students within the MMA-MSS that provides a structured opportunity for medical students to run an advocacy campaign on a public health topic.

James H. Sova Memorial Award for Advocacy
Jeffrey Schiff, MD, MBA, received the Sova award, given to the extraordinary health care champion who comes along every once and a while. Schiff is the former medical director for Minnesota Health Care Programs at the Minnesota Department of Human Services. He served as medical director from 2006 until earlier this year.

MMA Foundation’s Physician Volunteerism Award
John Goeppinger, MD, a retired family physician in Red Wing, received the Physician Volunteerism Award. Created by the MMA Foundation in 2018, this award recognizes physicians who make extraordinary contributions as volunteers to serve people who have been left behind or who have few options for health care. He was nominated by two of the clinics where he is a regular and long-time volunteer. He also has volunteered extensively in Africa and the Middle East.

Poster Symposium Winner
University of Minnesota Medical student Walter (Nick) Jamburgauer, Jr., (along with students on the PHHP POLST project) won the sixth annual MMA Poster Symposium for work on “Administration and Utilization of POLST Among Long-Term Care Facilities in Minnesota.”

Next year’s Annual Conference is scheduled for September 25–26, 2020, in St. Louis Park.
MMA Partners with Bounce Back Project to present resilience conference

In its efforts to bring the joy back to medicine for thousands of physicians across the state, the MMA is partnering with the Bounce Back Project to present a resilience conference December 4–5 in Plymouth.

The conference, which is dedicated to improving physician and other health professional well-being and resiliency, is a collaboration of physicians, nurses and hospital leaders from multiple health systems.

“One of the MMA’s top priorities is to support professional satisfaction,” says MMA CEO Janet Silversmith. “So, partnering with the Bounce Back Project to expand and extend their groundbreaking work is an ideal opportunity for MMA, our members and everyone in health care in Minnesota.”

Highlighted speakers for 2019 include:

**Joel Carter, MD**, will speak on “Meaning, Medicine & Parallel Process—Stories of Hope & Healing on Both Sides of the Stethoscope.” His keynote will include stories and reflections to remind attendees what’s most important—and the gifts of being a part of the healing journey of patients.

**Amit Sood, MD**, will speak on “The Resilient Option.” His presentation will share the neuroscience and psychology of stress and resilience, and will present the evidence and components of a structured program to decrease stress and enhance resilience.

**MPR’s Cathy Wurzer** will present “Talking About Death Won’t Kill You.” Wurzer has convened community conversations about living and dying across Minnesota. She has always believed in the power of sharing stories. She helped create the non-profit End in Mind to inspire and empower people to be engaged participants in all stages of their lives, but especially at the end of life.

**Amaryllis Sánchez Wohlever, MD**, will discuss “Recapturing the Joy of Medicine.” The closing keynote presentation will inspire physicians to recapture their original call to medicine and provide strategies to help nurture that mindset in practice. Discussion will include ways to remain engaged and joyful in medicine despite the many challenges we face.

Register at [www.bouncebackproject.org/events](http://www.bouncebackproject.org/events). Cost is $395.

Founding partners include Stellis Health, Allina Health and CentraCare Health.

The conference objectives include:

- Share knowledge, the results of research and lessons learned on the prevalence, drivers and consequence of burnout among healthcare providers.
- Discuss strategies addressing the challenges and barriers we face as health care providers in today’s complex health care environment.
- Identify and discuss best practices and experiences in building individual and organizational resilience.
- Foster resilience through the building of relationships and social connections.
FROM THE CEO

As CEO of the MMA, I am delighted to launch this new column in Minnesota Medicine. In every issue, I hope to give you a glimpse into the inner workings of the MMA, to highlight some of our recent and upcoming activities and to showcase the impact of your membership support.

More than 400 members voted during the MMA’s annual leadership election in August—thank you! In addition to adopting changes to MMA bylaws, new leadership was elected. See page 24 for more details.

The MMA held its Annual Conference September 20–21 in Duluth. It was a great event that focused on ensuring patient access to care. There were educational forums on access to obstetric care, suicide prevention, prescription drug costs and Medicare for All, and policy discussions on member-submitted proposals ranging from racism in health care to gender equity in medicine to parental leave in GME programs to insurance coverage for scalp-cooling treatment. Keith Stelter, MD, was inaugurated as the MMA’s new president at the conference. It was particularly exciting to have Gov. Tim Walz close the conference and offer his strong support for boosting Minnesota’s vaccination rates. See page 24 for more about the conference.

The members of the MMA are organized today into either at-large areas (geographic areas without a defined component medical society) or into one of 19 component medical societies, which are charted by the MMA and have unified membership. Two decades ago, there were more than 30 components but, over time, some have merged, closed or otherwise struggled to remain active or to retain volunteer leadership. Component medical societies in the Twin Cities, Rochester, St. Cloud and other areas have remained active and engaging for members. The MMA convened a work group earlier this year to examine component activities and develop a new model to strengthen MMA-component relationships. The MMA is in active discussions now with component society leadership and welcomes your input on how to add value to your membership and support local involvement.

Effective January 1, 2020, the MMA’s endorsed professional liability carrier, COPIC, will be offering MMA members a 10 percent premium discount. I am thrilled that MMA is partnering with COPIC—a physician-developed and physician-led company that is focused first and foremost on patient safety and high-quality care. To learn more about this new and significant membership benefit, contact the MMA (mma@mnmed.org) for more information.

It’s membership renewal time! Please renew your MMA membership for 2020 now and invite a colleague to join, too! Membership fuels MMA’s work and your support is critical to ensure that the voice of physicians is heard.

Did you know? The MMA accredits 21 health care organizations in Minnesota and North Dakota to deliver CME to their physicians and other providers. Because of the MMA’s accredited and direct and joint CME activities, we facilitated more than 28,500 interactions with physicians and supported the delivery of more than 7,300 CME credits through more than 1,200 educational activities.

Please contact me (jsilversmith@mnmed.org) at any time to share your ideas and thoughts. MM
News Briefs

MMA testifies to improve insulin legislation for physicians

In late September, MMA staff shared concerns on behalf of the state’s physicians regarding a new Senate proposal that would provide insulin free-of-charge for up to 12 months for patients who qualify.

The Senate Health and Human Services Finance and Policy Committee met and heard testimony on a new proposal from Sen. Eric Pratt (R-Prior Lake) that would ensure ongoing affordable access to insulin for those earning less than 400 percent of the federal poverty level.

The proposal calls for physicians to submit forms to drug companies that would in turn deliver insulin back to clinics for prescribing.

“Most clinics are not designed to store and dispense insulin,” Dave Renner, MMA director of advocacy, told the committee. “The administrative costs to accommodate this would be large. In addition, it has the potential to create confusion for patients with co-morbidities who would need to go to the pharmacy for one drug and the clinic for their insulin.”

Renner suggested to the committee that the proposal be modified so it’s similar to the current use of manufacturer’s drug coupons. Once the patient qualified for Pratt’s Minnesota Insulin Assistance Program, the physician would provide the patient with the needed prescription. The patient would then take that to the pharmacy to be filled, and the pharmacy would submit the benefit card for reimbursement by the drug manufacturer.

Several committee members commended Pratt for his proposal; others said it did not sufficiently address emergency cases of patients like Alec Smith, who rationed his supply of insulin because he couldn’t afford the prescribed dosage. He died of diabetic ketoacidosis. His mother, Nicole Smith-Holt, testified that more was needed to include an emergency provision.

No action was taken on the bill. Pratt expressed an interest in continuing his work on the bill and incorporating suggested changes.

House Democrats continue to pursue legislation, HF 485, known as the Alec Smith Emergency Insulin Act, introduced by Rep. Mike Howard (DFL-Richfield). The bill would provide a 90-day supply of insulin, free-of-charge, for low-income Minnesotans who cannot afford their insulin, funded by a new registration fee on insulin manufacturers and distributors.

MMA member joins influential opioid advisory group

MMA appointee Halena M. Gazelka, MD, who practices pain and palliative medicine at the Mayo Clinic, is part of a 19-member Opioid Epidemic Response Advisory Council, announced in mid-September.

The council also includes another physician, Anne Pylkas, MD, representing the Minnesota Chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine. Pylkas will serve as the group’s chair.

The group will help guide Minnesota’s efforts to combat a drug and overdose epidemic that has spread to every region of the state. It held its first meeting in late September. Its first report and project funding recommendations are due in March 2020.

Among other things, the council will make recommendations about projects and initiatives to be funded through the Opiate Epidemic Response Fund, which is expected to raise $20 million annually through fees collected from drug manufacturers and distributors.

Along with Gazelka and Pylkas, voting members include:

- Willie Pearl Evans, public member, Anoka
- Kathryn L. Nevins, DNP, public member, Nevis
- Darin Prescott, DNP, tribal representative, Morton
- Nicole Anderson, tribal representative, Onamia
- Esther Muturi, mental health advocate representative, New Hope
- Alexia Reed Holtum, nonprofit organization representative, Minnetonka
- Wendy Burt, Minnesota Hospital Association representative, St. Paul
- Roy Sutherland, Licensed Opioid Treatment Program, Sober Living Program, or Substance Use Disorder Program Representative, Minneapolis

On the calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bounce Back Project’s 4th Annual Healthcare Provider Resilience Conference</td>
<td>December 4–5</td>
<td>Plymouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>MMA Day at the Capitol</td>
<td>March 4, 2020</td>
<td>St. Paul</td>
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• Sarah Grosshuesch, local department of health representative, Delano
• Toni Napier, alternative pain management therapies representative, Ogema
• Judge D. Korey Wahwassuck, Grand Rapids
• Peter Carlson, Minnesota Ambulance Association representative, Cannon Falls
• Katrina Howard, PharmD, Board of Pharmacy representative, Minneapolis
• Rep. Erin Koegel, Spring Lake Park
• Rep. Dave Baker, Willmar
• Sen. Mark Koran, North Branch
• Sen. Chris Eaton, Brooklyn Center

Non-voting members include:
• Commissioner of the Department of Human Services or a delegate
• Commissioner of the Department of Health or a delegate
• Commissioner of the Department of Corrections or a delegate

**Surgeon General visits with physician in Rochester**
Vice Admiral Surgeon General Jerome Adams, MD, visited Minnesota in late August to meet with Mayo Clinic staff and trainees, as well as local physician leaders from Olmsted County’s public health office, physicians from Olmsted Medical Center, representatives from innovative social service organizations and members of the Zumbro Valley Medical Society (ZVMS).

During their time with the Surgeon General, these leaders shared their multi-level collaborative efforts to not only address disease and illness, but also “to go upstream” to address prevention and the social determinants of health, which contribute to poor health outcomes and health disparities.

Dionne Hart, MD, an MMA board member and ZVMS co-president, says she was pleased to learn that ZVMS’s collective efforts align with the Surgeon General’s priorities.

“Dr. Adams’ visit invigorated us, as we discussed opportunities to expand our collaborations and utilize our resources even more efficiently,” Hart says.

**Fairgoers favor recreational cannabis and stricter gun laws**
Informal polls at the Minnesota State Senate and House of Representatives booths at the Minnesota State Fair revealed that fairgoers are in favor of recreational cannabis legalization and stricter gun laws.

During the 12-day event, 11,239 people filled out the poll at the House exhibit, and more than 6,900 took part in the Senate poll. Poll questions included topics currently being discussed at the Capitol. Both bodies asked fair-goers to weigh in on 12 questions.

Here’s a sampling of what was asked regarding health care issues: At the Senate booth:
• 55 percent said recreational cannabis should be legalized in Minnesota for those 21 and older.

Health commissioner deliberates on medical conditions for cannabis program
Physicians and members of the public were asked earlier this fall to provide comments to Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Commissioner Jan Malcolm as she deliberates on adding two new medical conditions to the state’s medical cannabis program.

For consideration in 2019, MDH has accepted two petitions for age-related macular degeneration and chronic pain.

State law gives the health commissioner authority to add to the list of qualifying medical conditions and allowable delivery methods.

The public may petition the commissioner to consider adding conditions from June 1 through July 31 each year; a seven-member citizen review panel assists the commissioner in this process.

The original qualifying conditions in the program include:
• Cancer associated with severe/chronic pain, nausea or severe vomiting, or cachexia or severe wasting
• Glaucoma
• HIV/AIDS
• Tourette Syndrome
• Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)
• Seizures, including those characteristic of epilepsy
• Severe and persistent muscle spasms, including those characteristic of multiple sclerosis
• Inflammatory Bowel Disease, including Crohn’s Disease
• Terminal illness, with a life expectancy of less than one year, if the illness or treatment produces severe/chronic pain, nausea or severe vomiting, cachexia or severe wasting

Additional conditions were added through the petition process as follows:
• 2015: Intractable pain
• 2016: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
• 2017: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Obstructive Sleep Apnea
• 2018: Alzheimer’s Disease
• 2019: TBD
Every successful sheriff needs many deputies

I didn’t realize what I was getting into when I first joined the MMA 23 years ago. I thought I would participate in some committee work, then perhaps step back and do something else. Yet something drove me toward getting more involved.

Lately, I have been thinking a lot about why I joined that committee in the first place and why I continued my involvement.

After some self-analysis, the answer I kept coming to was this: “I thought I could make a difference.” After all, isn’t that why we all do what we do, day in and day out? We seek to make a difference in the lives of our patients and our communities, and change them in positive ways. We all seek lives of purpose. Sometimes it might be hard to see our purpose and what difference we are making, but it is there.

The MMA exists to make a difference. It exists to help us in our lives of service and can help us by deepening that sense of purpose. The MMA is the organization that collectively channels our ideas and energies to make a difference in our lives, the lives of our patients and the communities in which we live. The MMA is the framework for all of us to work together across specialty lines and organization boundaries, thereby making Minnesota the best place to practice medicine.

We all know that there is an incredible amount of work to do to continue improving medical care in Minnesota and beyond. Problems like mental health care access, cost of medications, increasing health disparities and many, many other things continue to plague our daily lives and, more importantly, the lives of our patients.

For the MMA to continue this work and advance our goals, we need physicians of all specialties, skill sets and employer affiliations to work toward solving these wicked problems.

In my mind, being elected MMA president is like being elected the county sheriff. He or she may be the one called on to make public comments about investigations and other happenings in the county, but the sheriff isn’t the one who does most of the work. For that, there needs to be a large cadre of dedicated and talented deputies who work in many facets to keep the people in the county safe.

I encourage all Minnesota physicians to think of themselves as deputies serving in your area of expertise. Your efforts, big or small, many or few, together and facilitated by the MMA, will create a force that can truly make a difference and change the world. MM