

Outgoing President's Message: Robert E. Hobbs, MD

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It was an honor to serve as President of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO) for 2016-2017. The year was filled with a variety of advocacy, community, and educational activities. The AMCNO remained strong and fully active as the collective voice of physicians in Cleveland and Northern Ohio, and will continue to do so. The AMCNO focuses on several areas: legislative and medical-legal advocacy, communication and education, and community activities; a review of each follows.

In terms of legislative initiatives, the AMCNO supported reforms in prior authorization this year, which were subsequently signed into law by Governor John Kasich. We continued to advocate for a physician-led, team-based approach to patient care and opposed independent practice authority for allied health personnel. We continued to support efforts to curb the opiate epidemic plaguing Ohio, including use of the Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System (OARRS), treatment guidelines for acute and chronic pain, naloxone to save lives, and the "Good Samaritan Law" for calling 911 in the event of an overdose. The AMCNO continued to advocate for the continuation of Medicaid expansion, which has benefitted 700,000 Ohioans. In fact, the Board of Directors sent a letter to Congress stating their position on healthcare reform and the continuation of Medicaid, and emphasizing that the AMCNO is committed to working with congressional leaders to work toward efficient health system reform initiatives.

We will face new and ongoing legislative issues in 2017, including items in the state budget, tort reform (HB 7), step-therapy, price transparency, preservation of Medicaid expansion, surprise non-coverage, scope of practice, controlled substance dispensing regulations, one-bite rule, non-compete clauses, medical marijuana, and Graduate Medical Education funding.

The AMCNO Medical-Legal Liaison Committee consists of a team of physicians and attorneys that reviews legal decisions in the courts likely to impact the practice of medicine. This year the committee filed amicus curiae briefs with the Ohio Supreme Court on cases involving the statute of repose, the cap on noneconomic damages, the definition of a medical record,

access to patient information, interlocutory appeals, and the apology statute. Our track record in supporting these cases has been excellent, based on the final Supreme Court rulings.

The AMCNO joined a lawsuit with the Ohio Hospital Association and other medical associations against the State of Ohio seeking to block the Price Transparency Law from going into effect on Jan. 1, 2017. This legislation was introduced as part of a budget bill in 2015 without any preliminary committee hearings. The law was later deemed unworkable by hospital and physician groups. Despite using the best computer modeling, physicians and hospitals would be unable to provide patients with accurate and timely financial data prior to rendering service or performing a procedure. Discussions on price transparency will continue this year.

In terms of education, the AMCNO and the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association organized the annual Medical-Legal Summit, which featured Gail Wilensky, PhD, who discussed the future of healthcare. Other topics included the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA), medical malpractice lawsuits, medical marijuana, and managing vulnerable patients. The AMCNO also organized a seminar that highlighted the financial and legal aspects of medical practice.

The AMEF is the charitable arm of the AMCNO. It provided financial assistance for scholarships, educational forums, and community initiatives. The AMEF supported the Business of Medicine seminar, Immunize Ohio event, Violence Forum, Medical-Legal Summit, PALS (or, Physicians Are Linked with Students) medical student event, Doc Opera, Ohio Infant Mortality Summit, and the Annual

Golf Outing fundraiser. In addition, the AMEF awarded two grant requests, assisting students with career choices and developing an online educational program on controlled substance prescribing. Additionally, the AMEF granted seven scholarships to students attending Northern Ohio medical schools.

Community activities attempt to tackle difficult societal problems. With that in mind, the AMCNO co-sponsored a regional forum on violence with the Free Clinic of Cleveland, held a panel discussion on drug addiction at the Ohio Healthcare Trade Faire, and joined coalitions to address public health issues of chronic diseases, infant mortality, opiate addiction and lead poisoning. The solutions to these problems are never easy, and a multifaceted approach seems to work best.

Politically, the AMCNO endorsed Pat Fischer and Pat DeWine as candidates for the Ohio Supreme Court. Both justices indicated they would abide by the constitution and uphold tort reforms, and both were subsequently elected. The AMCNO's Political Action Committee, NOMPAC, participated in fundraisers for Supreme Court candidates and Ohio Senators. AMCNO members conducted candidate interviews among applicants seeking election to the Ohio legislature and partnered with the Ohio State Medical Association in providing endorsements.

I have had a busy but fulfilling year serving as President of the AMCNO. I am grateful to many individuals for their assistance and guidance—in particular I am most appreciative of the AMCNO EVP/CEO Elayne Biddlestone, who provided experience, wisdom and management skills that made my job easier. I am indebted to the Executive Committee for helping me make tough decisions. I thank the Board of Directors for their involvement, input, and insight. I also thank the AMCNO staff, Abby Bell and Tara Camera, for daily management of the Academy.

I am confident that our new President, Fred Jorgensen, MD, will lead the AMCNO effectively to face the challenges of the practice of medicine and embrace new opportunities for the organization. ■