

Every Physician Counts and Every Patient Matters

By Dr. Jayesh Shah, 2016 BCMS President



Thank you for bestowing me with this honor.

It is my privilege and honor to represent 4,700 Bexar county physicians, residents and fellows; the 8th largest county medical society in the United States.

I have had the privilege, for the past 16 years, of working in many capacities in our organization for our shared vision; A healthier Bexar County populace. For these entire 16 years, one person has always stood by my side as my support and my critic - my wife Neha, a physical therapist and Lymphedema Specialist.

It is my passion to serve organized medicine. Last year, an incident in my own family gave me a totally new perspective about health care, which I would like to share with you briefly.

In August of 2014, my mother suddenly developed left-sided weakness. After hospitalization and rehab for 50 days, she came home. From an invalid, she got stronger day-by-day and now is able to walk with a walker and is able to feed herself. During this stressful time, I saw the American health care system from the other side of the fence, not as a physician, but as a family member of a patient. And what I saw was an efficient health care system that worked. I saw that the health care system and team-based care put a smile on my mother's face and brought relief to our family.

I share this story not to tell you what is good or what is bad about the health care system, but to help us, the physicians, to understand how to practice medicine in these times of change and how to continue to do the right thing for our patients.

It reminds me that life is fragile and can change in a fraction of a second. It reminds me that we are on this earth for a limited time and just like my mother keeps that beautiful smile under all adversities; let us remember to keep that smile.

It can be frustrating to practice medicine at certain times, when you are overwhelmed with the number of patients we have to see with limited resources, when the electronic health record system or the computer stops working in the middle of a busy day, when the insurance company denies authorization for a test or treatment that our

patients need. I know I am not alone in my frustration — I hear from physicians of every specialty who are concerned about the new regulations forced on us every year - fights with the insurance companies, the unsustainable pace of their jobs, poor leadership and lack of support. We all agree: providing excellent care to patients is NOT negotiable. Together, we have demanded that the barriers physicians face in delivering excellent care to our patients be removed. Please join me to “stop the RED TAPE CAMPAIGN.”

The Medicare trust fund will be insolvent by 2030. Inaction is not an option. We must make structural reforms to Medicare to ensure it is a sustainable program that will be around for our children and grandchildren. To strengthen Medicare and to ensure that it meets the healthcare challenges of current and future seniors, we must take steps to develop long-term solutions. These solutions must protect the doctor-patient relationship, increase provider and consumer responsibility and accountability, promote cost efficiency, fair access and preventive health and bring back the satisfaction and joy in practicing medicine.

Our patients share with us their difficulties, their pains, their life and they trust us to help them. As physicians, we try to keep our patients happy and help them meet their needs. There is no other profession as rewarding as ours. A recent American Medical Association survey showed that 75 percent of patients wanted to see their physicians even if they had to wait longer. A recent survey of 8,000 patients by the University of Chicago showed that 97 percent of the patients wanted the doctor to discuss the treatment options and two-thirds of them wanted their doctor to make decisions for them. Polls consistently showed that the patients trust their physician and what better job satisfaction can we get than our patient's trust.

AMA recently surveyed 600 primary care physicians. Doctors in the survey said that forming long-term relationships with the primary care physician is the most important thing that can be done to obtain better medical care and to decrease the cost of health care. Research backs this up. If patients change their doctor, they have delayed diag-

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nosis and spend more on care than a patient who has a consistent relationship with the same physician.

As your medical society President, I will continue to advocate for the patients at the core of which is the physician- patient relationship. Your involvement in the Bexar County Medical Society is at the core of advocating for our patients and our profession.

BCMS successfully fought for scope of practice issues so that patient access to physicians stays intact. Physicians should continue to lead the team-based care as healthcare continues to evolve in the next century. In the last legislature, 40 scope of practice bills were introduced and organized medicine won all of them.

This was accomplished with only 10 percent of TEX PAC membership and less than 1 percent of the members going to the First Tuesday visit at the capital. This, in my view is unacceptable. It is our moral duty as physicians to be members, to be a part of TEX PAC and to give our time and talent to protect this profession.

BCMS successfully helped to pass medical tort reform in Texas to ensure access to care for patients. BCMS with TMA has been advocating for physicians, patients, and our community since 1853. But we cannot do it without you. Next year we plan to develop focused key contacts for each state representative and senator because they listen to their constituents and once we build the relationship, it is easy to get our point across. With the 2016 election cycle coming, this is the time for you to get engaged with our local state representative and our senators.

For the past decade we have not had a BCMS member serve as president of TMA. Now we have the man for the job. I have seen him leading the BCMS delegation to TMA and now leading the TMA delegation to AMA. He understands the issues at its core and he will represent us all well at the Texas Medical Association. Dr. David Henkes - is running for the position of President-elect of TMA. Each one of us can do our part to ensure that a BCMS member leads the state association in the upcoming election in May.

Thanks to my predecessors, past presidents of BCMS. Thank you for your vision and service to the society. It is because of your hard work, we are where we are today.

BCMS has a new home on 1604/ Lockhill Selma. Our theme this year is BCMS is Our Society Where "Every Physician Count's and Every Patient Matters"

It does not matter whether you are an academic, private practice



Dr. Jayesh Shah addresses the audience at the BCMS officers installation ceremony on Jan. 23.

or military physician; whether you are hospital-employed or insurance-employed;

whether you are a military physician or a researcher; whether you are in the first five years of practice or 40 years of practice; or whether your practice is small or large. Your new home will provide the perfect environment for members to address common issues. Thanks to BCMS staff and able CEO.

BCMS has a new home for our legacy to continue so that all our patients continue to receive the best healthcare like my mother did, for years to come and all our aspiring young people like my daughter Prachi, a public health student at UTSA and my son Aj, a junior at Keystone, continue to feel that becoming a physician is still one of the best choices and feel that they have the strength of an organization like BCMS to back them; because for BCMS - "Every Physician Counts and Every Patient Matters."

Thank you.
Dr. Jayesh Shah