

## Holiday Greetings from the President!

*By Dr. Jayesh Shah, 2016 BCMS President*

I am humbled and honored by the opportunity that was bestowed on me to serve as the President of this esteemed organization. Years may come and go but whatever changes we as physicians collectively make should have a positive impact on the future of health care. The issues physicians faced yesterday will be different from what they will face tomorrow and such issues can only be addressed if young physicians realize the importance of their involvement in organized medicine so they can make their voices heard and can recommend changes that are in favor of both the physicians and their patients.

As we wind up the year, I would like to highlight what we accomplished at BCMS in 2016. But first, I would like to share a program called “Healthy Choice” developed by the Cleveland Clinic to improve the future of health care.

Each individual should be responsible for their own health and for shaping their own future. Obesity is one of the biggest drivers of preventable chronic diseases and associated health care costs in the United States. Health care costs in the U.S. are 20 percent more per capita than the rest of the world and the bottom line is that health care costs are higher because people are sicker. Many have chronic conditions because of poor lifestyle choices (the problem of plenty). Even though people know maintaining a healthy weight and eating healthy are important, it is hard to put this thought into practice. If we can incentivize healthy behavior, we can control some chronic conditions and decrease health care costs.

“Healthy Choice” was started by the Cleveland Clinic for its employees in 2010. The key idea was to give employees incentives to avoid six chronic medical conditions and, in return, see a decrease in their insurance premium rates. This program has been a huge success. Cleveland Clinic showed a flat-lining of health care costs for



the first few years, followed by a 2 percent decrease last year.

The six major chronic diseases responsible for 75 percent of all health care costs are; high cholesterol, high blood pressure, excess weight, diabetes, asthma, and tobacco use. In the Cleveland Clinic program, workers saw a physician or a mid-level provider who monitored weight, cholesterol, etc., and offered education and counseling for a healthy lifestyle. The Healthy Choice program was voluntary, but because incentives were huge (i.e. workers who met the goal could save 28 percent in health insurance premiums) many workers participated in the program. Since 2010, almost 66 percent of workers with one or more of the six major chronic conditions managed to get them under control, with a majority of them continuing to keep them under control. The incentive system succeeded in changing behavior. Cleveland Clinic also made changes such as removing unhealthy options and reducing portion sizes in their cafeteria, removing high sugar snacks and drinks from their vending machines, adding an onsite fitness center, and providing yoga classes along with other health boosting activities.

A few employers across the nation are following this program designed by Cleveland Clinic and are developing work place wellness programs for their employees to decrease health care insurance costs.

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Incentivizing employees by decreasing their health insurance premiums is in turn making employees healthier and happier.

Can we implement Cleveland Clinic's Healthy Choice program in all health care systems throughout the U.S.? Can we incentivize patients and change their behaviors? At some point, with health care costs skyrocketing and the Medicare system not able to handle the cost, is it fair to ask citizens to pay more for their healthcare if they do not choose to participate in healthy lifestyle choices? Once consumers of healthcare buy into this incentive system, people's behavior will change and that will also change the food industry. The food industry will ultimately have to change and provide more healthy choices at affordable costs.

In the same way CMS has developed incentives for physicians to participate in quality measures, is it possible for CMS to develop incentives for patients to follow healthy lifestyle choices? The future of healthcare will require the redesign of primary care and development of incentives for healthy behavior.

And now some of the accomplishments in 2016 at BCMS:

Probably the most significant accomplishment of 2016 was the completion of the new BCMS building on Loop 1604. The building was dedicated in May 2016 and was named "Project of the Year" by the American Subcontractors Association. The BCMS building houses the society's staff and is used for all society committee and board meetings, special events, community events, health fairs and automobile show, but is also used by several physician and community groups and organizations. Feedback about the new building received from BCMS members, their friends and supporters has been extremely positive. BCMS also prepared a historical souvenir booklet about the history of BCMS buildings in Bexar County and provides some basic information about BCMS services and membership. BCMS members all contributed to the new building and many community businesses contributed as well – thank you!

Advocacy on behalf of physicians and medicine is always the number one initiative of BCMS, and it was no different in 2016. During the year, BCMS participated in over 20 legislative meetings and events, responded to several calls for action advising federal and state agencies on issues such as MACRA, the TMB, and the VA system,

and engaged in many media interactions on Zika, the TMB and vaccine safety.

BCMS continues to support many active committees serving its membership, including legislative and socio-economic, physician health and rehabilitation, public health, emergency preparedness, communications and publications, caduceus, medical-legal liaison, as well as mediations and censors. A new leadership committee was formed to encourage and mentor physicians to participate in the governance of TMA and BCMS.

The BCMS Foundation gave \$15,000 in scholarships in 2016 to graduating high school senior entering healthcare.

BCMS held many events throughout the year including CME events, New Member Welcome Social, Women in Medicine Event, general membership meetings, the annual automobile show, the annual installation of new BCMS officers, and a variety of seminars and socials. Some of these events were fundraisers and contributed to BCMS' overall financial success and helped to keep the cost of dues reasonable.

BCMS continued the information flow to its members through the *San Antonio Medicine* magazine, *The Weekly Dose* newsletter, regular email updates and announcements, and has added social media to physicians and the public with at least five posts per day. The number of users that friended BCMS in 2016 is now over 330.

BCMS will continue to face challenges as the delivery of healthcare changes. I am confident that BCMS has a solid foundation and will continue to deliver future leadership to strengthen organized medicine. I would like to thank the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, CEO Steve Fitzer, and all the staff at BCMS for their outstanding support throughout this year.

Thank you,

*With warm regards and wishing you a Happy Holiday Season!*

*Dr. Jayesh Shah*

### **Cleveland Clinic program reference:**

<http://www.mauldineconomics.com/frontlinethoughts/how-to-rebuild-healthcare-right>