

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A. Antoine Kazzi, MD, FAAEM, FACEP
CAL/AAEM President and AAEM Board of Directors

Being my last CAL/AAEM President's message, what you read next will always remain one of the most difficult pieces I ever had to write. It has been said that every time we say goodbye, we grow a little and die a little. As I end my two years in office as President for CAL/AAEM, I move on to assume other challenges on behalf of AAEM. However, I find myself reflecting over the last two years, over what we accomplished, and where CAL/AAEM is heading next.

Over the last two years, CAL/AAEM doubled its membership numbers, balanced its budget, and established an exemplary proactive constructive relationship with CAL/ACEP. Over the last two years, we would have organized four CAL/AAEM Business Forums, addressing again and again the most controversial practice issues in our specialty. We struck and protected a landmark educational agreement for all CAL/AAEM, CAL/ACEP and AAEM members, providing considerably discounted registration fees to members of all three organizations. We avoided falling prey to the absurdity of duplication and competition in the provision of educational products. We actually ended up providing exceptional opportunity for face-to-face exchanges and proactive cooperation during California assemblies and forums where speakers and attendees proudly honored or displayed their organizational (often dual) memberships. We even held two years in a row a CAL/AAEM-CAL/ACEP co-sponsored California Business Forum at the CAL/ACEP Scientific Assembly, where we both got to hold our board of directors' meetings. We took controversy and turned it into cause for unity. We turned potential divisiveness and negativity into new and additional opportunity for all emergency physicians (EPs). We set an example for all EPs nationally on how to cooperate and to enrich each other. We defined the norm for when and how to differ. Through the alternative strategy we followed, the growth of CAL/AAEM set a historical example on how to add value, how not to reactively offend or duplicate. We augmented and complemented each other.

Our electronic CAL/AAEM News Service continues, uninterrupted for the 4th year in a row, providing almost daily news updates on relevant issues in EM that we secure by monitoring various news agencies and electronic lists, and through the help of our members who forward to my attention articles they find. As a matter of fact, the number of our subscribers has gone up by 40% over the last year, with weekly requests asking to join when they hear of our service through a colleague or newsletter.

Over the last two-year term, our most important accomplishment, Robert Derlet and I, was the establishment of the California Journal of Emergency Medicine (CaJEM). CaJEM serves as our quarterly newsletter. Yet, to avoid duplicating the exceptional newsletter that CAL/ACEP's Lifeline provides, Bob and I intentionally undertook to establish CaJEM early on as a peer-reviewed medical journal. Two years later, CaJEM continues to grow in quality, content and distribution. Thanks to the commit-

ment of many California academicians and community EPs, we tripled it in size. Thanks to the UC Irvine EM faculty financial contribution and to medical student and resident volunteers, we were able to fund its publication and distribution. We also set a national example by restricting advertisements to EP groups that declared their compliance with the AAEM Mission and Vision Statements and the CAL/ACEP Fairness in the Workplace Bill of EP Rights. CaJEM is now a reality that will stay, a quarterly medical journal that we have been distributing to over 2,100 board-certified EPs, to all CAL/AAEM members and to many AAEM leaders across the nation. CaJEM's issues remain also available to all EPs freely on the web at www.aem.org.

The success of the proactive credible strategy is also proudly displayed throughout the program of the AAEM Scientific Assembly in San Francisco. Among the 14 California speakers, 7 are CAL/AAEM members, 2 CAL/ACEP Past-Presidents, and 7 current or past board members.

Through our official participation with a designated CAL/AAEM official representative to the CAL/ACEP Governmental Affairs Committee (GAC), we participated in the legislative deliberation that set our CAL/AAEM statewide agenda and ensured that our voice and input was helpful, constructive and heard. We provided our CAL/AAEM leadership with GAC legislative reports, participated in the annual February EM Legislative Conference in Sacramento, coordinated and launched letter-writing campaigns, and helped restore the legislative California Legislative Network. Of course, I must take a moment here to acknowledge the exceptional commitment, passion and dedication of a true community EP leader from rural Merced, my friend and colleague, Dr. Paul Windham.

Through our seven members on the California EMPAC, we maintained input and unity in what we can display as ONE united political front at the legislative level. We raised and contributed money to the fund. Yet, we retained the ability to proceed, when and only if needed, with the direct pursuit of legislative and legal issues. This is evident in the CAL/AAEM-AAEM support and Amicus Brief that we provided EPs and ACHP in their legal battle against CHW and Meriten. This was a stand we took against what many of us believe was the theft of EP income stream and the future of our graduates by non-clinicians or by greedy EP and hospital corporate executives. The victory is evident, and yes, it came at an emotional, personal and financial cost that many will likely continue to pay at the level of their local EDs. Yet, we helped put a stop at a dangerous practice strategy that would have spread like an epidemic across the whole nation. This high profile case would have through a domino effect been rapidly imitated by the numerous greedy EP and hospital executives across the state and the nation – had ACHP, CAL/AAEM and AAEM not taken a stand, a legal stand, to stop it here, in California, while everyone else in organized EM unfortunately chose inaction.

With this regard, I ask you to read my July 2001 President's Message, before you read the letter to the editor that we are publishing in this issue regarding the ACHP-CHW lawsuit. My

response is direct and simple: on Friday March 15th, 2002, at 2:30pm John Christiansen, MD, FAAEM, from the Board of CAL/AAEM and ACHP, will be the guest speaker at the CAL/AAEM Business Forum during the AAEM Scientific Assembly at the Hyatt Regency in San Francisco. He will be giving us all an update describing the outcome and much of the detail of the CHW-ACHP lawsuit. I wish to respectfully invite the letter's writer or his designee to be our second official speaker during that open forum, to present his view, to answer direct questions, and to ask his own. Through open disclosure, we can put many of the questions I raised to rest.

I wish to thank you all for your support over the last two years. In particular, I wish to thank Paul Windham, Ramon Johnson, Fred Dennis, Drew Fenton, Roneet Lev, Kay Whalen, John Bibb, Dan Higgins, Loren Johnson, William Durkin, Sheila Virgin, Karen Thibodeau, John Christiansen, Wesley Fields, Howard Davis, Paul Kivela, Wesley Curry, Brian Potts, Boris Lubavin, Scott Weiner, Scott Rudkin, Melissa Jacobs, Miguel Alvarez, Jeannie Tsai, Catherine Park and Sabrina Pak. Most of all, I wish to thank my friends and colleagues Peter Rosen, Robert Derlet and Mark Langdorf for their consistent inspiring support, friendship and guidance. Of course, I could not name everyone who helped. However, I am indebted to the current board members and past leadership of CAL/AAEM, AAEM and CAL/ACEP for their confidence and support, even during the heat of the most controversial moments. Without your confidence in my vision and genuine motivation to do what is best for EM, and even without the negativity of the most controversial moments, our collaborative activity in California would have never been possible. To all of you, thank you.

Of course, yes, as I conclude this last message as CAL/AAEM President, I choose not to end it with a sad note. I choose to launch us all on a new challenge. CAL/AAEM invites all our members and CaJEM readers to take a close look at the 2002 CAL/ACEP-led ballot initiative. This is "our" initiative. We – CAL/AAEM – support it. We participated directly and indirectly in its birth, and should assume the responsibility that it entails. We, Emergency Medicine, are embarking on a major legislative challenge that will need the support of every single one of you. Please take a close look at the detail of this initiative in the "Legislative Update" in this issue, and contribute to the "Ballot Initiative Fund" with \$500 per Emergency Physician. Read the detail, understand the issue, feel free to contact Paul Windham or me and to ask us any questions you have. Most of all, take a stand, contribute to the fund, and let us win – together – our right to citizenship in Emergency Medicine. Let us win – united – this historical battle!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Dr. Kazzi:

I was disappointed to read your President's Message in the July 2001 issue of the California Journal of Emergency Medicine. As President of CAL/AAEM, you have a responsibility to your members to avoid authoring a message based on conjecture and false information. On many occasions, you have written and spoken of the importance of fairness in emergency medicine. You did not extend that courtesy to Emergency Physicians' Medical Group. By not contacting the leadership of EPMG to obtain a balanced view, you performed a disservice to your membership and the integrity of your organization. In fact, the purchase price for the three medical groups to secure the assets of Meriten was only a fraction of your quoted figure. There was full support from EPMG's shareholders – physician and mid level providers – for this transaction.

EPMG continues to attract high quality, residency trained emergency physicians for many reasons, including those that you noted:

"...EPMG has always provided (and will continue to) many core attributes that procure more fairness to its physicians than most other groups out there."

EPMG is proud to have broad-based physician and midlevel ownership, democratic governance, and open-book finances with fair and equitable scheduling and compensation systems. Additionally, EPMG has made a substantial commitment to emergency medicine leadership, education and the professional development of its health care providers.

Dr. Kazzi, as evidenced by your active involvement in CAL-ACEP, I know that you recognize the importance of unifying all of California's emergency physicians in order to take on the challenges that seriously threaten our specialty including ED overcrowding and uncompensated care. It is much more important that we agree to continue to work together for the benefit of our physicians, mid level providers and patients than to make unsubstantiated judgments about our respective business practices.

Sincerely,

Norman Label, MD
President
Emergency Physicians' Medical Group
Roseville, CA