



Looking Forward:

Societies Continue Work in Key Focus Areas

BY ELIZABETH SAMPSON

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The Wyoming Academy of Family Physicians is focusing on physician well-being in 2019, which will be the spotlight of their annual meeting in Jackson this summer.

"Currently, there are plans on Wyoming physicians presenting on this issue including Dr. Betsy Spomer, a WAFP member, but we have just applied for a half day national AAFP program on physician well-being to join us in Jackson to expand the offerings on this subject," said Dr. Dean Bartholomew.

He said the WAFP has undergone a transformation over the last 18 months to make sure it can become an influential player in the Wyoming medical community. The mainstay of this transformation was a revision of the bylaws to allow the board of directors to be filled with interested physicians no matter their location in the state.

"The WAFP now has a fully-filled Board of Directors for the first time in years," Bartholomew said.

They have been active in reviewing national policy stances of the American Academy of Family Physicians as a whole and have weighed in on the AAFP stance on Centers for Medicare

and Medicaid Services (CMS) proposed fee schedule changes as well as the AAFP policy statement on healthcare models.

They've also been working with the Wyoming legislature.

"The WAFP helped to sponsor and fund advocacy of child endangerment legislation that allows for healthcare providers and law enforcement to remove at-risk children from the home where abuse has occurred so that these children can undergo medical examination for their safety," Bartholomew said.

Lastly, the WAFP continues to support the family physician workforce. They help sponsor medical students who attend family-physician centered trainings and conferences, and help sponsor Wyoming family physicians who are attending the Wyoming Leaders in Medicine Physician Leadership Academy. In January 2018 the WAFP sponsored the first-ever group KSA at the WMS/WAFP annual meeting in Jackson.

Bartholomew asked that anyone with questions, ideas or concerns to contact him at drbart93@gmail.com.

The Wyoming Chapter of the American College of Physicians held their annual meeting in Laramie in October, which allowed them to interact with medical students, see the new WWAMI facilities and regenerate excitement about working with students. They will hold their annual meeting in the fall again, and hope to get future providers involved.

“The time to expose medical students to what internal medicine is early in their career,” said Dr. Mike Tracy.

Other work includes having a new hospitalist committee that is making a forum for hospitalists to communicate and interact with one another.

Ultimately, they also hope to increase the visibility of internal medicine and increase involvement across the state.

“The Wyoming chapter is small,” said Tracy. “We’d like to be small but mighty.”

Throughout 2018, the Wyoming Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics worked on an HPV education and awareness campaign in conjunction with the Utah Chapter of the AAP, and they will continue this campaign in 2019. This project aims to help providers gain more knowledge about the benefits of the HPV vaccine and works to increase the HPV vaccination rates. They are creating appropriate materials to teach both providers and patients about the vaccine.

Dr. Suzanne Oss said the project has received positive feedback from all the pediatric offices who have taken part in it, and it counts as Continuing Medical Education (CME) for providers.

Gun safety for children is another 2019 focus. Dr. Oss stressed that this is not a gun control initiative, but rather a program for gun safety in homes where there are both children and guns.

Working alongside the WAFP and WMS, the Wyoming Chapter of the AAP is also advocating in favor of Wyoming Senate File 0060—Protection of children-child endangerment amendments. Oss explained that this legislation, if passed, will allow children who are in a home where another child has been abused to be examined for child abuse as well.

They will hold their annual meeting in conjunction with the WMS meeting in Jackson. At last year’s conference they offered education on asthma, allergies and behavior and mental health. This training was open to both pediatricians and any other providers who wished to attend.

Finally, members of this academy serve as pediatric representation to agencies such as neonatal and newborn screening and Wyoming disaster planning.

Lobbying on behalf of the state’s physician assistants is a big part of what the Wyoming Association of Physician Assistants does. This year they hope to send delegates to Washington D.C. to lobby, just as they did last year. PA Shawn Ficken said this lobbying mostly has to do with reimbursement.

They will hold their annual conference in conjunction with the WMS conference in Jackson, which Ficken said is a good opportunity for networking with other providers from around the state. At last year’s conference at Little America in Cheyenne they had speakers and discussions as well as breakout sessions like a suturing refresher course.

Again this year they will give two PA students who are members of the WPA a \$1,000 scholarship.

The Wyoming Ophthalmological Society spent the early part of 2019 actively fighting against Wyoming Senate File 55, the Optometrists Practice Act Amendments. This bill, sponsored

by the Joint Labor, Health & Social Services Interim Committee would allow optometrists to perform eye surgery in Wyoming, said Dr. Anne Miller.

The specific wording of the bill is as follows: a person holding a license to practice optometry under this act is authorized to perform advanced optometric procedures upon the human eye and adnexa for which the licensee has received training from a college of optometry accredited by the Accreditation Council on Optometric Education or any other accrediting body of optometric education.

When the Wyoming legislative session ended, the bill had been postponed indefinitely by the House.

Working to expand their membership is a top priority for the Wyoming Association of Psychiatric Physicians. They are a small group in a large state, but they hope to grow.

“Our purpose is gaining membership,” said Dr. O’Ann Fredstrom. “There are two groups we want to benefit. One is our psychiatrists themselves, and two are the patients.” She added she would like to visit with any psychiatrist in the state who is not already a member or is not active to find out what they would like to see the organization working toward. She asks that they contact her at teton2@wyom.net.

She said the work they are already doing is keeping an eye on the work of the state legislature and remaining in contact with their legislators. Fredstrom said one challenge they face is the fact that Wyoming has not signed on to the Medicaid expansion.

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“That has greatly limited a lot of people’s access to care,” Fredstrom said. “It has impacted our mental health ability here.”

Finally, they plan to hold their annual meeting in June in conjunction with the WMS.

Creating a labor sharing agreement is the current work of the Wyoming Society of Anesthesiologists. They are creating a bulletin board of sorts that lists anesthesiologist groups around the state and notes which ones need coverage so people can go on vacation or attend to other matters.

“In smaller communities where you have a community hospital, you really can only afford to have two or three providers cover the same specialty, said Dr. John Mansell. “That means you are on call every third night for your whole career.”

Working with other Wyoming providers is more affordable than flying in doctors from out of state to cover shifts. It also will allow Wyoming doctors to pick up extra work if they want to.

Being able to work in places around the state other than their home base has the added benefit of helping these anesthesiologists get to know their colleagues in a large state.

Anyone who wants more information about this should contact Mansell at johnmansell7@gmail.com.

Mansell, also of the Campbell County Medical Society said their upcoming meetings will include short presentations about resources available in the Gillette area that will augment a healthy lifestyle. Those will include information about nearby wilderness activities, personal trainers from local gyms, healthy recipes from area restaurants and gourmet food stores and tour guides from places like the Black Hills.

He said the goal is to make sure their providers have access to things that reduce stress and burnout and encourage taking steps to improve their health.

Laramie County Medical Society makes it a point every year to provide networking and socializing opportunities for their physicians. With their members working both independently and employed by Cheyenne Regional Medical Center or other large medical groups, these events allow them to meet up with people they wouldn’t see on a regular work day. Positive feedback from their members encourages LCMS to continue hosting this type of event.

For example, they hold an annual summer barbecue and a Christmas party with Santa at the Nagle Warren Mansion in Cheyenne.

“We understand the gauntlet of medical school residency, tak-

ing care of patients and just the stress of just being a doctor,” Dr. Kristina Behringer said of the importance of meeting together with other doctors in the community. “There’s an immediate understanding and sense of belonging.” She said it also helps to alleviate physician burnout.

“The physician community, our patients and the employees feel the loss of a physician leaving, so we want to work with anyone we can partner with to promote the community to the physicians and keep them here,” she said.

One such partnership is the one LCMS has with Cheyenne Regional, who they work with toward recruitment and retention. They are also working with the hospital’s foundation to host physician and PA dinners.


LCMS is active with the Wyoming legislature and Wyoming Leaders in Medicine. Every year they hold a legislative update with an invitation to legislators where they can discuss issues that will affect physicians and their patients. The Wyoming Leaders in Medicine session in Cheyenne is held at the same time as the legislative update. In addition to having a great conversation with the legislators, they also had the chance to meet with Mike Ceballos, the new director of the Wyoming Department of Health.

Each year Natrona County Medical Society hosts a family Christmas party, a summer ice cream social and a pre-legislative review. They also offer edu-

cational opportunities for their members and others throughout the year on a variety of topics.

Their second annual gala is another big event for 2019, where Dr. Stephen Brown will receive the Natrona County’s Physician Service Award. Last year’s recipient was Dr. John Barasso.

Several county medical societies are hoping to become more active in the coming year. Albany County Medical Society donates any funds in their account each year to any local clinics who need assistance. Sheridan County Medical Society is in a rebuilding state. They have already held a quarterly chapter meeting in July with about eight people attending. They are looking for more member involvement.

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