



New England Surgical Society Newsletter

Volume 5, Number 1

Fall 2002

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Albert W. Dibbins, M.D.

Four and a half years ago, as I approached becoming a bonafide "senior citizen", I received the paperwork from HCFA which allowed me to join or reject Medicare. I chose the latter. My reasoning was simple and straightforward. I was employed, had a reasonable income, and was paying a private insurance company a large monthly fee for excellent medical coverage. Therefore, I did not need the government to have to pay for my medical costs. My quick math said that if all the people in the United States who were in my situation would choose the same option, millions of dollars could be cut from the annual health care budget. I felt quite righteous! My attempt at altruism was misplaced and short lived.

Six months later I submitted a claim to my private insurer. I received a letter denying the claim because I was entitled to Medicare, which they considered to be my primary insurer. They would pay only a percentage of the residual claim after deducting the equivalent of the Medicare reimbursement and the Medicare provider adjustment. If I was not enrolled in Medicare it was my tough luck!

After wading through the private insurer's automated telephone system, I reached the medical director of the company with a bad temper and a short fuse. I pointed out that I was paying twice as much for my insurance as I would pay for a Medigap policy. However, the company was treating it as Medigap insurance and making a lot of money without providing any benefit. I was informed that this was not only legal, but it was the law. Disbelieving, I then tackled the telephone system at HFCA, finally reaching a knowledgeable and apologetic young staff person. He pointed out that since I was employed by a "small" business, the law required me to have Medicare as my primary health insurer at age 65 with any private insurance as the secondary insurer, regardless of any altruistic intent on my part. The law had been written this way so that employees of small businesses could not lose healthcare benefits when they turned 65. Although I now understood, I still rankled at the manner in which the private insurers were using the law to their benefit.

(continued on page 3)



**2003 Annual Meeting
September 19-21**

The Hyatt Regency
Newport, Rhode Island

Highlights of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING and the Annual Business Meeting September 27-29, 2002 / Dixville Notch, New Hampshire

Report of the Secretary

Current membership totals 661 Surgeons: 267 Active, 354 Senior, 38 Associate, and 2 Honorary Members. NESS will continue to host a New Member Breakfast during the Annual Business Meeting and to co-sponsor the Resident Research Day at the New England Medical Center to encourage Resident participation.

Beginning with the 2003 Annual Meeting, only LCD/PowerPoint Presentations will be used. NESS will be meeting in conjunction with the New England Society for Vascular Surgeons at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Newport, Rhode Island from September 17-21, 2003.

Dr. Welch expressed his appreciation to the following members, who are completing their respective terms of office on the Executive Committee: H. David Crombie, Past President; Jeremy R. Morton, Vice President; Frederick H. Bagley, Representative from Vermont; and Neil S. Yeston, Program Committee Chairman.

Report of the Treasurer

Robert M. Quinlan noted that income for operations, i.e., Dues and Contributions totaled approximately \$94,000, while the annual meeting generated sufficient revenue to underwrite the expenses and return a surplus. During the past year, revenues totaled \$169,105, expenses amounted to \$159,132, resulting in a surplus of \$9,973. The Society presently has \$136,478 in assets, close to its goal of maintaining reserves of at least 100% of its operating budget.

Total operational costs average \$130 per member, comparable to similar professional surgical societies.

Report of the Recorder

Thomas A. Colacchio reported that 11 of the Society's manuscripts from the 2001 Annual Meeting, together with Dr. Crombie's Presidential Address, had been published in the April 2002 issue of the *Archives of Surgery* representing a 58% acceptance rate. The 2002 Annual Meeting includes a smaller number of abstracts and a number of panel discussions and the editor has agreed to consider the publication of the panel discussions, as well as the Mixer Lecture for this year and in the future.

Report of the Program Committee

The Program Committee incorporated changes to the overall format of the Annual Meeting. Twenty-four abstracts had been received for consideration; 8 were chosen, four of those eligible for the Residents' presentation awards. The Committee expanded the panel discussion format to include two panel discussions and a "What's New in Surgery" lecture.

Dr. Yeston along with Past Program Chair, Dr. Pricolo, incoming Chair, Dr. Perencevich, Dr. Dibbins, and Dr. Welch met to evaluate the year's Scientific Sessions and to discuss strategies for the 2003 Program in Newport, Rhode Island.

Report of the Charitable Foundation

H. David Crombie reported that total assets of the Foundation were almost \$175,000. The Foundation agreed to continue

to expend no more than 50% of its annual income to fund the Resident Prize awards, the Mixer Lecture Program and the Spring Resident Paper Research Day Competition. The Foundation has elected: Morton G. Kahan, President; Howard G. Prithman, Secretary; Frederick Radke, Treasurer and Graeme L. Hammond who will succeed Dr. Crombie as the representative from Connecticut.

American College of Surgeons' Board of Governors

Francis D. Moore, Jr., reported that the College had reorganized and established a 501(c) 6 umbrella organization known as the American College of Surgeons Professional Organization under which the American College of Surgeons, a tax exempt educational 501(c) 3 foundation existed as a subsidiary as well as the American College of Surgeons PAC currently under the leadership of Dr. Andrew L. Warshaw. Contributions to the ACS PAC will be viewed as personal contributions. NESS made a \$1,000 contribution to the ACS Scholarship Fund.

American Board of Surgery

James C. Hebert reported that effective July 1, 2002, Dr. Frank R. Lewis, Jr. had succeeded Dr. Wallace P. Ritchie as the Executive Director of the Board. He also noted several amendments to the ABS booklet of information regarding references to primary and secondary components in defining general surgery as well as amendments to the sections on purposes of the Board and the meaning of certification. Dr. Hebert also reported on the extensive activities and correspondence related to the New Resident Duty Hours Proposal as published in June by the ACGME.

Dr. Hebert referred to the request from the American Board of Surgery regarding the creation of a new specialty board, the American Board of Vascular Surgery. NESS voted to correspond with Dr. Steven H. Miller, EVP of the ABMS, noting the NESS's opposition to the creation of a separate board for vascular surgery. Dr. Foster appointed an ad hoc Committee, chaired by Dr. Dibbins and including Nicholas P. W. Coe, Jeremy R. Morton and Victor Pricolo to draft the response.

Newsletter

Frederick H. Bagley, Outgoing Editor, thanked the Executive Committee for its support during his tenure. Incoming Editor, Edward Z. Walworth, noted that the *Newsletter* would continue to be published twice a year in July and November.

Future Annual Meetings

Spirited discussion took place among the membership, during which issues were considered from each of the state representatives. John Russell reported a positive response to the new meeting format from members in Connecticut. Victor Pricolo, representative from Rhode Island also noted that members were excited about the new format as it encouraged more small group sessions and audience participation. In addition, Massachusetts members questioned the program format, the location, and the costs related to bringing the family to the meeting.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

(continued from page one)

I use my own experience as an example to point out that, in my opinion, both the costs and the systems we use to pay for health care in this country are unsustainable. In a recent Sunday New York Times editorial (October 13, 2002), Marcia Angell, former editor-in-chief of the New England Journal of Medicine provided the best succinct summary of the issues I have seen. I urge every member of the Society to read it. She points out that private health insurance premiums are rising thirteen to twenty five percent per year and half of these premiums never reach hospitals or physicians but are siphoned off as overhead and profits to investors.

On the other hand, while Medicare's overhead is much lower and involves no profits, it is not a perfect system. As I receive my personal Medicare summaries from my own physicians' visits, I see the amounts that Medicare pays and the Medicare adjustments which each practice must make and I worry about my colleagues' ability to sustain themselves in this environment.

I do not know what the answer to this problem is, but I feel that we as a professional society need to debate the issues and to become involved for our patients' sake because it is as important as our daily obligation to provide the best surgical care. In the lead-in to Dr. Angell's editorial it says, "The health care system is broken. Does anyone care?" I hope the New England Surgical Society will answer, "Yes, we do care!"

I use my own experience as an example to point out that, in my opinion, both the costs and the systems we use to pay for health care in this country are unsustainable.

Editor's Note: If you would like a copy of Dr. Angell's NY Times op-ed column referenced by Dr. Dibbins, please send an e-mail to: lorraine@prri.com and request the October 13, 2002 Op-Ed piece.

FUTURE MEETINGS

**2003 Annual Meeting
September 19-21**

The Hyatt Regency
Newport, Rhode Island

**2004 Annual Meeting
October 1-3**

Hilton Montreal Bonaventure
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

**2005 Annual Meeting
September 30-October 2**

Mount Washington Hotel
Bretton Woods, New Hampshire

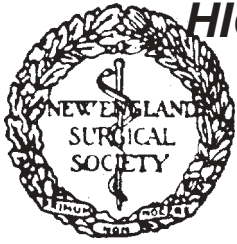
ATTENTION SENIOR MEMBERS

In order to keep our records up to date, you are being asked to supply a current CV to the NESS Administrative office. Please send your CV to NESS, 13 Elm Street, Manchester, MA 01944 or via e-mail to: ness@prri.com.

NECROLOGY

Clifford C. Agnew, M.D., Boca Raton, Florida
Benjamin Barnes, M.D., Lincoln, Massachusetts
John R. Brooks, M.D., Weston, Massachusetts
Wilfred I. Carney, M.D., Providence, Rhode Island
Richard J. Cleveland, M.D., Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts
Jack W. Cole, Camden, Maine
Knowles B. Lawrence, M.D., Needham, Massachusetts
Oakley A. Melendy, M.D., Augusta, Maine
Francis D. Moore, M.D., Boston, Massachusetts
Robert R. Rix, M.D., Manchester, New Hampshire
Carter R. Rowe, M.D., Fredericksburg, Virginia
Ernest Sachs, M.D., Hanover, New Hampshire
George F. Sager, M.D., South Portland, Maine
Laura E. Saunders, M.D., Winchester, Massachusetts
J. Gordon Scannell, M.D., Westwood, Massachusetts
Fennell P. Turner, M.D., Auburn, Maine
Edward B. Twitchell, M.D., Peterborough, New Hampshire
Kenneth W. Warren, M.D., Boston, Massachusetts
Lester F. Williams, M.D., Nashville, Tennessee

If you personally know any of our deceased colleagues and would be willing to write a biographical summary for the Annual Program Book, please contact the NESS Administrative Office, (978) 526-8330.



HIGHLIGHTS of the 83rd Annual Meeting of the New England Surgical Society

September 27-29, 2002

The Balsams Resort, Dixville Notch, New Hampshire

The 2002 Annual Meeting of the New England Surgical Society was recently held at the Balsams Resort in Dixville Notch, New Hampshire where the grace, pace, and leisure of 19th century New England can be appreciated and enjoyed today as it was then.

In response to the membership survey conducted last year, the Program Committee redesigned the scientific program. The meeting commenced with the 4 best scientific papers submitted for competition by our residents. The papers were superb and covered a number of timely subjects including the care of the patient with an injured spleen, the management of the short esophagus, unique mammographic calcifications correlating with highly aggressive tumors, and an elegant gene risk identifier for medullary thyroid carcinoma in patients with MEN2 syndrome. Not to be upstaged, the member presentations were of equal excellence. The elimination of the invited commentary provided an opportunity for many probing and provocative questions and comments and resulted in a rewarding educational experience for all.



Saturday's schedule included two interactive panel discussions: Inflammatory Bowel Disease discussed by David Schoetz, Neil Hyman, Peter Mowschenson, and Jeffrey Cohen; and Medical Error/Malpractice reviewed by Thomas Tracy Jr., Linda Crawford, Thomas Krizek, and Kenneth Kern.

Participants also heard an up-to-date summary of "What's New in Surgery? Urology" (akin to the ACS Bulletin) from Steven Shichman. The NESS membership honored Gerald Austen, who received the richly-deserved Nathan Smith Award for a lifetime of excellence in clinical care, scientific investigation, and education. Always a highlight of the meeting, the President's Address was delivered by Roger Foster, entitled "Breast Cancer Detection and Treatment: A Personal and Historic Perspective".

Another highlight of the meeting was Tom Krizek's presentation of the Mixer Lecture entitled "Halsted is Dead!" that can only be described as a magnificently delivered perspective on personal integrity, response to

stress and temptation, and the ethical and moral challenges of being a physician and surgeon in today's healthcare environment.

The President's Banquet was filled with good food, fine wine, and fraternity culminating in a delightful historical prospective on Nathan Smith, delivered by an authority on his life, Constance Putnam of Concord, MA.

The social events offered by the Balsams were plentiful, including golf, tennis, wine tasting, hiking, and culinary classes. Others simply found an overstuffed chair to get lost in their favorite novel. The 2002 NESS annual meeting certainly provided much to think about on the long ride home and in the coming year.



RESIDENT PRIZE AWARD WINNERS

First Place

Linwah Yip, M.D.

M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, Texas

"MEN2: Genotype-Phenotype Analysis"

Second Place

Raul G. Zunzunegui, M.D.

Providence, Rhode Island

"Casting Type Calcifications with Invasion and High Grade DCIS: A More Aggressive Disease?"

Third Place - Tie

David H. Rothstein, M.D.

Maine Medical Center, Portland, Maine

"Minimally Invasive Collis Gastroplasty: Institutional Experience"

Kimberly L. Hartnett, M.D.

Maine Medical Center, Portland, Maine

"Management of Adult Splenic Injury: A 20-Year Perspective"

FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING.....



Our thanks to Edward Walworth, M.D., NESS Newsletter Editor, for taking the photographs during the NESS Annual Meeting.

NEW MEMBERS

Paul A. Barcewicz, MD
New Haven, Connecticut
David L. Berger, MD
Boston, Massachusetts
John D. Birkmeyer, MD
Lebanon, New Hampshire
Elizabeth W. Brady, MD
Hartford, Connecticut
David M. Brams, MD
Burlington, Massachusetts
John H. Braxton, MD
Portland, Maine
Josef E. Fischer, M.D.*
Boston, Massachusetts
James W. Georgitis, MD
Biddeford, Maine
Theresa A. Graves, MD
Providence, Rhode Island
James D. Iglehart, MD
Boston, Massachusetts
Kevin P. Keating, MD
Hartford, Connecticut

Shukri F. Khuri, MD
West Roxbury, Massachusetts
Joseph A. Latina, MD
Cranston, Rhode Island
Demetrius E. M. Litwin, MD
Worcester, Massachusetts
Paul E. Morrissey, MD
Providence, Rhode Island
Elizabeth A. Pomfret, MD
Burlington, Massachusetts
James J. Pomposelli, MD
Burlington, Massachusetts
Rekhinder K. Singh, MD
New Britain, Connecticut
Russell A. Strong, MD
Concord, New Hampshire
George Tellides, MD
New Haven, Connecticut
Robert Udelsman, MD
New Haven, Connecticut
Paul Vignati, MD
Hartford, Connecticut

* Senior member

2002-2003 COMMITTEES

Program Committee

Nick P. Perencevich, Chair
Desmond H. Birkett
David E. Clark
Thomas A. Colacchio
James C. Hebert
Rocco Orlando, III
Thomas F. Tracy, Jr.
John P. Welch
Albert W. Dibbins, Ex-Officio

Nominating Committee

Ashby C. Moncure, Chair
H. David Crombie
Roger S. Foster, Jr.

NESS Charitable Foundation

Morton G. Kahan, President
Howard G. Pritham, Secretary
Frederick R. Radke, Treasurer
Graeme L. Hammond, Director
R. James Koness, Director
Dennis W. Vane, Director



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