

## **A Message to Our Members**

### **2019 NCMS President - Minh Q. Nguyen, MD**

It is indeed a profound honor and great pleasure to serve as your 2019 president. It is good for us to get together, to renew friendships, to share experiences, and above all, to be reminded of the dignity and honor of our profession that is our duty and our privilege to use wisely for the benefit of others.

A simple tongue depressor can act as a metaphor reminding us that when we work alone, we are more prone to losing our enthusiasm, to suffering from burnout and job fatigue, and to become disillusioned with our practice of medicine. Just like a single tongue depressor, we are easy to break.

But, when we work together, like a stack of tongue depressors, we are much stronger. We can help and support each other, and in our oneness we can find strength. It is precisely in that strength that we can do the most good.

By focusing our collective knowledge, energy, good intentions, and social influence, we can improve our community, our profession and ourselves. Here are some goals I would like us to consider as points of focus for the coming months:

#### **Goals for ourselves:**

We are our own best advocates. We now have the dubious distinction for the highest rate of burnout among professionals. Avoiding this and other mental and emotional problems means we need to manage the stress we are under as doctors and as the healthcare profession at large.

We can do that if we:

- Support each other, especially in time of need. We need to look out for one another and to ask for help before it is too late or too difficult to recover.
- Are the local sources for mentoring young people who are considering medicine as their career.
- Are the resources of support for our colleagues who are in need: personal and as the county and state medical societies.
- Practice what we preach to our patients and take time for exercise, good nutrition, and our own renewal, including tapping our own emotional and spiritual resources.
- We must take care of ourselves and achieve a work/life balance.

#### **Goals for our community:**

When we are united, we find a voice that can influence and empower elected officials to act in the best interests of healthcare.

We can and we should influence public policy by engaging and educating legislators to:

- Improve our care for our patients, making healthcare affordable and reasonable.
- Protect our conscience and professional autonomy, especially when our decision about what's best for the person sitting in front of us may be in conflict with the power exerted on us, be that a healthcare institution, an insurance company, or government mandates. If we surrender this Professional and Personal Conscience, we surrender our souls, and the souls of the profession. As a patient I'd want my doctor to be my advocate (the Golden rule).

***Our patients deserve no less.***

In April 1963, Martin Luther King Jr, the great Civil Rights Leader who advocated non-violent civil disobedience, quoted St. Augustine, the 4th Century Bishop and Father of the Church as he wrote in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” --- ***“An unjust law is no law at all.”***

**Goals for our profession:**

We are the captains of our own destiny. Or in medical terms, we are the doctors who can make our profession healthier! This year we need to work on several problems.

- This is not a complete list, by all means:
- We need to address the prior authorization problem.
- We need a credentialing and staffing process that is fair to physicians based on professional criteria and not on arbitrary rules.
- We must continue our fight to retain control of patient care where physicians are the leader of the team. We need to stop the push to equalize all providers. Justice is equal opportunities, not equal outcome.
- We must engage more colleagues, particularly younger doctors and women colleagues to join our cause. We should look for opportunities to speak to our colleagues, one on one, and in groups (meetings, talks etc.) to encourage support and better collegiality.
- We should each be a good-will ambassador, bringing our colleagues who are not yet a member to the County and State Society.
- We must work together to protect the honorable profession in which we have spent our lives.
- Let us resolve to commit ourselves to improving the environment around us.
- Let us rekindle the hopes and dreams we had when we first entered medical school. Let us do our part to pass on this noble profession of medicine a little better for the next generation.
- Let us be like this collection of tongue depressors, hard to be broken together, so that our collective strength and wisdom will help in restoring healthcare as a right for our patients and a privilege for ourselves.
- I suggest you take a piece of a broken depressor, put your initials on it and keep it in your wallet or purse as a reminder of the noble causes we champion and the great power entrusted to us in our calling as healers and as leaders.

As Mahatma Gandhi said:

***Let us be the change that we wish to see in the world.***

I humbly ask for your support, counsel, friendship, and for your prayers.

**NCMS 2019 President - Minh Q. Nguyen, MD**

