



## President's Comment

**Bruce J. Applebaum, M.D.**

*President  
El Paso County Medical Society*



As this year and my year as President of the EPCMS draws to a close, I am prepared to continue to be an active participant in the medical society and the politics of medicine.

As I reflect upon this year and all its important events, I wonder if I and the medical society were able to make a relevant contribution or have any notable achievements. I would like to think so, but only the membership can affirm the value of its medical society and executive board. I could give you a very long laundry list of all our activities this year (you can always get an update from our executive director Patsy Slaughter); however, it is not the individual activities that make the medical society meaningful, but its sheer visibility, concrete presence, and representation within the community. Representation is the most powerful tool we have to offer each member as a whole medical community, and the best way to give the medical society a "pat on the back and say job well done" is to renew your current membership or become a new member.

If you asked me how I initially started upon the track toward this Presidency, I would be hard-pressed to find an answer. I know it started somewhere between our tremendous involvement and success as a unified force of physicians that helped to get proposition 12 (medical liability tort reform) passed in 2004 and 2008. This is when President-Elect Dr. Luis Urrea, convinced me to attend one of our executive board meetings. I was probably superficially engaged at that time, but somehow was elected to assistant treasurer. Over the course of the last 4 years since that election, I have climbed up through the executive ranks.

From this hierarchy, I now have a much greater understanding and appreciation of the activities and substantial importance of our County Medical Society. Unfortunately, it took me a long time before I became enlightened to this fact. Like many of you, my dedication to patients and practice restricted my ability to participate fully in medical society activities. What little time there is to spare we try to allocate to our families. There is just not much left in our weeks and months to deal with "petty" political matters. This is what I believed and struggled with for many years. I would hope that from my initial naiveté and subsequent experience, I can pass my knowledge on to those of you who still are unsure about or do not yet properly value the importance of the medical society.

Currently, the medical society and subsequently the Texas Medical Association (dual membership is required) are in a renewal of membership and new member recruitment phase. The TMA has a goal of 50,000 members. The TMA is already the largest state medical association in the country, and it is important for you to know that

the TMA is independent from the American Medical Association (AMA). It does not always walk lock-step with the AMA. If achieved, 50,000 members would make the TMA much more influential. However, there are still physicians who are not committed and who feel they are not represented. They don't want to spend the approximate \$800 for membership. I would be willing to debate anyone from any area of medicine about the merits and relevance of the medical society to their own particular area of work and interest, be it private practice, academic medicine, or public health. If you feel that the medical society does not truly represent your interests, then you are sorely mistaken.

It behooves all of us to preserve all the different practice options our profession has to offer. If there was only one way to practice medicine, than there would be less ability to move laterally or to "get out" of a bad position. The more options that are available to us, the less chance we have of being squeezed in the future.

One of our goals at the medical society is to protect physicians and their form of practice whichever it may be. We understand that by protecting the physician ultimately, you are protecting the patient, and there is no better goal for our medical society to attain. Preserving patient prosperity and health is our fundamental mission. So, when you peruse your current EPCMS and TMA renewal form and you are pondering the value of your membership, remember that we at the medical society revere you and your patients above all else, but we are valueless without you.

Like me, some of you may not be swayed by the abstract commentary above. You need concrete numbers about value and return on investment (ROI). Well, fortunately, the TMA website is able to provide that to you. So, if you are still in doubt and reluctant to be a member, then check this out: <https://www.texmed.org/ROI.aspx>. Finally, I would like to express my extreme gratitude to the medical society staff, Patsy Slaughter, Elsa Chaparro, and Diana Murillo, for keeping me moving in the right direction throughout the year. Also, I would like to thank our current executive board for all of their assistance, valuable advice, and educational input. I have full confidence that our President-Elect, Dr. Patricio Pazmino; will provide us with great and steadfast leadership (not to mention beautiful vacation photos) in 2013.

---

**Bruce J. Applebaum, M.D.**  
**President, El Paso County Medical Society**