My dear fellow members of the El Paso County Medical Society, I would like to thank you for electing me as the president of the medical society. I also would like to acknowledge Dr. Juan Escobar past president, for a job well done.

This is a legislative year; we will be facing with many challenges. All these new changes that are coming our way will change the face of organized medicine. It is incredible how we started our journey in the practice of medicine; in medical school our only object was to see the joy to treat patients. Business side of medicine was not taught and was never a concern; it was not a part of the curriculum. Now with ever changing regulations and changes to practice of medicine it is absolutely imperative that we all join with the EPCMS and TMA to fight for our beliefs and professional needs.

Many changes that are coming our way will affect the way we practice medicine, increasing cost to practice and decreasing reimbursement plus possible penalties in every step of the way, we must lobby our needs and concerns at both State and Federal level.

The reason healthcare reforms are coming because Medicare, Medicaid and CMS are broke. 75% of the costs are on chronic conditions, 50% of population uses less than three percent of total revenue. Whereas, 5% of the population spends almost half the budget. It is imperative to decrease cost, reduce unnecessary admissions, re-admissions and emergency visits. Risks stratify population; focus on high risk patients, and preventative care. In the next five years, more than 40% of provider revenues will be from “value based contracts”(VBPM), this will be a fundamental shift in provider economics.

Meaningful use (MU) and Physician Quality Reporting Systems (PQRS) were quickly implemented on providers, without full support from recommended IT, and sources. Providers needing exemption were difficult to get and penalties were enforced promptly. Now with VBPM being implemented in 2015, depending on group size and all providers by 2017, just like MU and PQRS which are very taxing to practices and penalties enforced most probably the same will hold for VBPM. Penalties for MU and PQRS are scheduled in 2015, these will affect practices drastically.

It is widely accepted that payment methodologies are changing and will continue moving to a pay-for-quality paradigm.

To prepare for VBPM, providers need to invest in technology, EHR, health data analytics and patient portals. Training care coordinators, and changing workflows. Avoidance of unnecessary procedures, and duplications of test. Patient to participate in their own activities, via patient portals and surveys. Managing of patient centered medical home teams. All the above changes are coming too quickly and not giving enough time for practice’s to adjust. This will lead to huge administrative burden and with decreasing reimbursement and possible penalties many practices will not survive these changes.

Health Information Exchange (HIE), are in various stages throughout State of Texas. There are 10 public HIE in Texas, they received 28 million dollars to develop and currently are in various stages and funds are drying up and sustainably at risk. HIE is important to decrease cost of healthcare dollar.

Another huge change that was delayed from 2014 is going to be implementation of ICD 10 in October 2015. This coding system is highly complex and the Government and practices are not ready for this change. It is highly anticipated that payment could potentially be on hold for two months, and many practices don’t have the funds to survive during that period.

With all the above changes that are anticipated, we more than ever have to join hands and be in numbers to address our concerns and needs to politicians. I must ask my fellow physicians to join EPCMS and TMA. Plan on visiting the State Capitol on the first Tuesday of April, we will be actively lobbying in these matters. TExMED house of delegates will be held on May 1st and 2nd, fall conference in late September and TMA advocacy retreat will be held on December 4th and 5th.

We as members of the society must remain highly active to address our concerns. Hopefully we will be successful in our endeavors.

Syed A. Yusoof, MD
President, El Paso County Medical Society