

Membership Has Its Privileges

In the last issue of *Northeast Florida Medicine*, I discussed the importance of advocacy and how the Duval County Medical Society (DCMS) is representing the medical profession from a local and state/national perspective relative to legislative and regulatory affairs. In most members' eyes, this remains the single most important benefit our county medical society can provide to its members.

Many of these intangible benefits come by means of effective lobbying, (e.g., defeating scope of practice expansion efforts by other healthcare professionals, or significantly narrowing the implementing language for amendments 7 & 8) as evidenced by the 2005 Legislative Session. Similar efforts in Washington, DC, as mentioned by Dr. Seals in his editorial, will produce positive monetary benefits for Medicare payment reform through increased reimbursement, or at the very least, stop planned decreases.



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While these outcomes are very encouraging, tangible benefits seem to have a more significant impact on physicians, and society as a whole, in today's world. Let's face it, the ability to physically wrap your hands around something and call it your own appeals more to one's senses. Who has not walked out of an exhibit hall with a bag full of "stuff" you probably did not need as much as the information that was offered by the exhibitors? Or, who has not signed up (or at least considered doing so) for a credit card you did not need for the sole purpose of getting the t-shirt or gadget that was being offered as a token of the company's eternal gratitude? The obvious challenge this presents is how can the DCMS provide tangible benefits that are meaningful for the membership?

The local community recognizes how valuable physicians are as allopathic/osteopathic healers of themselves and their loved ones. They also know that physicians are sophisticated consumers of goods and services, both professionally and personally. The latter has been made abundantly clear to me in that the DCMS receives numerous requests from individuals and organizations interested in partnering with the DCMS to reach the membership.

Historically, the leadership attempted to develop businesses that provided quality services to the physician community at affordable rates, (e.g., Mediphone Bureau). Competition eventually overwhelmed such business ventures and the Society determined that it would be more effective to provide membership benefits through partnerships and endorsements. This has proved to be an excellent way to provide to the membership tangible benefits such as discounts on goods and services.

The prime example of such an arrangement has been the six plus year endorsement of the medical liability insurance carrier ProAssurance, who provides a 5% discount on professional liability coverage through Mr. Steve O'Toole to DCMS members (see outside back cover). In January, the DCMS endorsed SunTrust Bank because it offers not only extremely competitive banking resources for physicians, but personal medical banker representatives, Cheryl Barnett and Kelley Mathews (see next page).

There are other organizations interested in partnering with the DCMS on everything from asset protection/financial planning to insurance brokerage organizations, automobile sales/leasing, printing companies, etc. How do we provide you with ways to access these services without wasting your time?

DCMS will conduct a membership survey in the coming months in order to help address this issue. The survey will include specific questions focusing on how the DCMS can provide more *value added* services and *tangible* benefits in addition to the DCMS Directory and this exceptional journal. Accomplishing this task will not likely solve all of your professional or personal needs. However, one thing you can rest assured, regardless of the service, we will make absolutely certain that there is a designated representative(s) to assist our members directly as opposed to some form of random selection. Anything less will not be acceptable.

I share the leadership's hope that all such benefits will make membership in this storied Society a necessity, rather than a line item budgetary decision. 

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