President’s Page
The Future of Health Care

By Narendra Trivedi, M.D.

Every day another political pundit rants about health care in the United States. Fox News believes that health care reform will end all civil liberties, while MSNBC believes that reform will not protect the American citizen enough. After one listens to the hundreds of opinions, one begins to question one's own cognitive abilities. At the end, physicians need to evaluate our nation’s state of health care and determine where they want to it to be a decade from now.

Regardless of one's political disposition, most believe health care delivery must be reformed. With health insurance rates rising by 35 percent every year, we need a change. The real question is: How involved will physicians be in the process of driving this change? When President Obama’s health care reform was passed, the only vocal physician group was the American Medical Association, which represents less than a quarter of U.S. physicians. As the country moves forward with implementing health care reform, many questions will arise: How do we control health care costs? How do we increase access to medical providers? How will physicians be reimbursed? What role will physician-extenders play? Physicians will need to decide if they want to play an active role in modifying health care delivery or if they want to fight to hold the status quo.

Physicians have a lot going for them, as they are the most respected members of health care delivery in the country. If physicians play their cards right, they can drive public opinion to preserve the quality of care Americans have grown accustomed to receiving. However, physicians cannot sit around idly and expect politicians to come to them for advice. We need to proactively increase our interaction with politicians and build relationships with state and national legislators.

The CSA has already started to reach out to our country’s leaders. In collaboration with the ASA, we have spoken with many congresspeople, reached out to the California Democratic Committee, attended the Republican National Governors’ Convention, and increased our voice in Sacramento. CSA leadership continuously submits opinion pieces to major influential newspapers. We actively are battling to preserve patient safety by repealing the CRNA “opt-out” provision signed by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. I have launched
the “Committee on the Future of Anesthesiology” to help the CSA identify innovative ways to advance the practice of anesthesiology by bringing new advances to anesthesiologists while reducing the cost of anesthesia and maintaining the quality and safety of patient care.

However, the CSA cannot do this alone. We need all anesthesiologists to take an active role and contact their elected officials, meeting with them and educating them so that they understand our cause. We need to write op-ed pieces promoting the safety, quality and other benefits of having a highly trained and educated anesthesiologist provide anesthesia services. CSA will continue to advocate for you and your patients, but if all physicians were to contact their elected officials, speak to the local newspaper, and stand up for what is right for their patients, then we will be able to guide health care reform, truly improving quality of care while reducing the costs associated with that care.

Join the CSA leadership and me in improving health care in the United States.

CSA Bulletin Cover for Volume 60, Number 1
“Snow Geese and Snow-capped Mountains”

The cover photograph of this Bulletin issue was taken in November 2010 at the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area in Northern California. The snow geese flying in this massive liftoff numbered in the many thousands that day. The snow-capped mountains in the distance are the Northern California Coastal Ranges. This image was captured with a DSLR in RAW and processed in Photoshop and Silver Efex.

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