

Executive Director's Page

"If You Build It, They Will Come"

By Barbara Baldwin, CSA Executive Director

This quote is from the 1989 movie "Field of Dreams" and refers to the main character, played by Kevin Costner, a farmer who is inexplicably driven to plow under a large portion of his crops and build a baseball field. Ultimately, the seemingly senseless act results in events that could not be imagined. A large project now taking place, to build a better CSA web site, is neither odd nor irrational, but we hope to achieve the same result.

In 2002, the Board of Directors approved a redesign and update of the CSA web site. The existing site has served the CSA very well for many years, but we are at the point where the web site needs to be expanded with new capabilities added. A "Members Only" section is needed as well as on-line nominations and elections, on-line dues payment, on-line application for membership and other features.

The CSA web site has evolved under the dedicated work of J. Kent Garman, M.D., CSA's Editor of Electronic Media. He created the site in 1995 and has devoted countless volunteer hours to increasing its value and utility to the members. He has passed on the nuts and bolts maintenance to CSA's webmaster, Andrea de la Peña, and now advises on content and the latest bells and whistles.

Like most organizations, the CSA is undergoing a transition from disseminating information predominately via paper to using electronic means to reach members and others. Although some will debate whether it's a better method, it is definitely faster and cheaper. As information quickly becomes obsolete these days, it's imperative that sources of timely and accurate information be available, and this is one of the primary goals for the redesigned web site.

There are four significant features to the new web site. First, a "Members Only" portal will make much of the information developed or compiled by the CSA (by member volunteers or staff) available only to CSA members. More information will be posted and available through links in this section, enhancing its importance as a member benefit. This section will also house other features available only to members, such as on-line dues payment,

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on-line nominations and elections, and access for members' to their own records in order to update information like address and primary work site.

Last year, under a directive from the House of Delegates, a task force was created to address the anticipated challenges in implementing electronic methods of conducting some of the CSA's business. Chaired by Past President Dan Cole, M.D., a set of guiding principles were developed and approved by the Board of Directors and House of Delegates in 2003. These principles take into account the varying needs and preferences of members as to how to participate in elections so that no member feels hassled or disenfranchised. We must "ensure that members receive the needed information that will allow them to make nominations; ensure that each member votes only once; maintain the principle of secret ballots; and have a mechanism of validating the authenticity of the vote."

The new web site will incorporate all those requirements. For at least the next few rounds of nominations and elections, members will receive information by both postal service and e-mail, and may nominate and vote for candidates on-line. Members also have the option of using the current method of mail-in ballots. Everyone will be strongly encouraged to receive nomination and voting information via e-mail and the web, but no member will be refused if he must receive it by "snail mail." In recent years member participation in nominations and elections has been poor; in some districts it has been 5% or less. We hope that offering the capability of making nominations and voting on-line will increase member interest and participation.

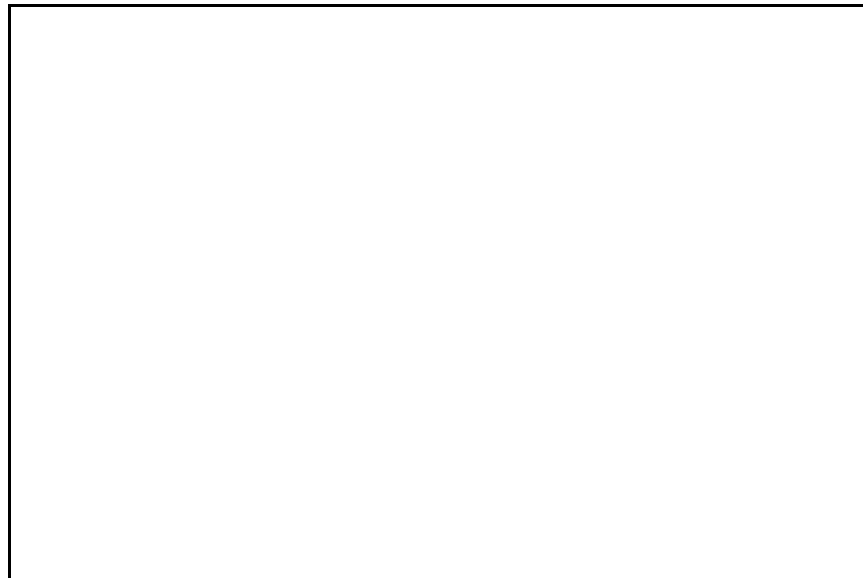
A new and expanded section for residents will provide resident members with information about serving as a director or delegate, resources such as how to get malpractice insurance and disability insurance, and the benefits of belonging to the CSA.

The third new feature is a section on patient information. The CSA's mission includes advocating for the patients of anesthesiologists. Since patients often don't meet their anesthesiologists until soon before a procedure, the CSA will make informational materials available, most of which are ASA-produced. To the extent possible, materials will be provided in Spanish in addition to English. Within the patient information section, a directory of members who specialize in pain medicine will allow patients to look for pain specialists in their geographic areas.

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Fourth, a Q&A section is being built where member questions in the areas of professional and practice issues will be posted with answers. This will be dynamic and timely, as the questions come directly from members and will be answered within a few days. Currently, most member questions come via phone call to the CSA office. Soon members will also be able to submit questions by e-mail to the office from the web site.

The CSA web site will continuously evolve to serve the members and public. However, members must be partners by telling us what you want and how the web site can work better for you. Eventually, the web site will be the primary method of keeping members informed of timely information. It will become the first place you go to participate in elections, register for meetings, find the latest news on Medicare, Medi-Cal, workers' compensation, and for the myriad other information and capabilities it will have. We hope that as the web site is launched, members will come.



CMA-CSA Legislative Day: James W. Futrell, Jr., M.D., Mark Ridley-Thomas, Member of the Assembly, 48th District, Jack L. Moore, M.D., and Sieglinde (Missy) Johnson, Senior Assistant to Mark Ridley-Thomas