



Vascular Society of New Jersey
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MONTHLY REPORT July 2008

From the President

Gary A. Drascher, MD, RVT, FACS

"Every truth passes through three stages before it is recognized. First it is ridiculed, second it is opposed, and third it is regarded as self-evident."

--Arthur Schopenhauer, philosopher 1788-1860

San Diego was a great location for the Vascular annual meeting last month.

There were several presentations using a large patient data set comparing Carotid Endarterectomy to CAS including one by Todd Vogel. All showed higher stroke rates with CAS, although methodological differences created a wide disparity in stroke rates.

The lead off paper was on Endovascular vs. open repair of ruptured Thoracic Aortic Aneurysms presented by Manesh Mehta from Albany. He will be the keynote speaker at our fall meeting, October 30, 2008.

Have a good summer!

From the Statehouse

Beverly Lynch

With the passage of the \$32.9 billion budget, which included a 15.5% cut in charity care to hospitals, the New Jersey State Legislature will go into its traditional summer hiatus, and is not expected to return until after Labor Day. The Legislature is only six months into its current two-year legislative session, and already over 5,500 bills have been introduced.

In addition to the charity care cuts, the new budget includes \$9 million to fund the "first step toward universal health care," which expands the state's HMO-style health care program FamilyCare to include parents earning up to twice the poverty level, or about \$42,000 a year for a family of four. The legislation also mandates coverage for all children through privately paid or public programs such as FamilyCare within one year of enactment.

Expected to start in September of this year, the plan is funded by \$8.9 million added last week to the proposed budget, with another federally matched \$1 million that will be used to promote the program. Within three years the projected annual cost is \$68 million, according to the Department of Human Services.

With roughly 96 percent of charity care funds - state aid given to hospitals for uninsured patients - covering parents who would be covered under the FamilyCare's expansion, sponsor Senator Joseph Vitale said the cost of the program will be offset by a reduction in state money to this fund by eliminating unnecessary emergency room visits.

The anticipated savings as a result, he said, is \$913 per adult enrolled in FamilyCare instead of using charity care funds.

NJ Legislators still actively considering expansion of NJ's wrongful death act...Physicians should act now to express opposition!

You may recall that in January, 2008, New Jersey's Legislature passed an expansion of the state's wrongful death act that would have allowed unlimited emotional damages in cases of negligent death. Governor Corzine pocket vetoed the measure, preventing it from becoming law.

The Legislature continues to consider the bill and the Governor's Office has been working with the trial bar on new language that Governor Corzine would sign. The medical community must register our opposition to this bill (A-1158/S-763) now to prevent it from passing the Legislature again this session.

New Jersey's current Wrongful Death law provides fair and appropriate compensation to families that have suffered harm due to the wrongful death of a loved one. New Jersey courts are consistently generous when interpreting the current law, providing expansive views of the pecuniary damage requirement, especially true in cases involving children.

New Jersey's current law is working – and working well – to ensure justice for its citizens.

Amending the law as proposed in A-1158/S-763 would take an already liberally interpreted Wrongful Death Act and create one of the most extreme acts in the country, putting an excessive and onerous burden on New Jersey's employers, doctors, its courts and the State.

If enacted, New Jersey would be one of only eight states that do not cap grief damages in wrongful death cases. The size of wrongful death verdicts in New Jersey is already at a point where a single verdict can place an individual's personal assets at risk or put a solvent company or medical practice out of business. Under this proposal, the threat of huge, disproportionate damage awards will inevitably increase insurance costs for doctors, hospitals and patients and add to the healthcare crisis in NJ. In addition to our poor medical malpractice laws, this situation would be untenable for doctors the medical community.

All physicians should take action now by talking with, writing or calling your Legislators...especially over these upcoming summer months when the Legislature is not meeting and things are relatively quiet. For more information you may also visit the website of the New Jersey Lawsuit Reform Alliance (www.NJLRA.org), which is coordinating the business and medical community's opposition to the bill.

News from the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services

The Patient Safety Initiative has prepared a newsletter on **Suicide in the Hospital Setting**. The newsletter highlights suicidal behaviors and risk factors to help hospital staff identify patients with suicidal ideation and reduce the number of suicide attempts. The newsletter is available at http://www.nj.gov/health/ps/documents/june2008_newsletter.pdf

The American College of Surgeons will conduct a "Trauma System Consultation" to provide a critical analysis of the current system and formulate recommendations for system improvement and enhancements within the State of New Jersey later this

summer. Prevention strategies that help control injury are an essential component of an integrated and coordinated trauma system.

The New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services (NJDHSS) is assembling a list of **injury prevention activities** conducted throughout the state during calendar year 2007. Any information you can provide about your department/group/individual injury prevention activities would be greatly appreciated. This might include a listing of workshops, publications, grand rounds, classes, health fairs, and trainings to include dates/locations, numbers of attendees, copies of press releases or newsletter articles or any other pertinent activities. Please send information to Kathy Lutz of NJDHSS at kathleen.lutz@doh.state.nj.us no later than Friday, July 18, 2008.

News from B. Lynch Associates

We are pleased to announce the addition of Robert Clawson to the staff at B. Lynch Associates. Rob spent ten years working for the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services in the Office of Emergency Medical Services, where he supervised the education and certification section. In this role, Rob served on numerous statewide EMS councils including the Emergency Medical Technician Training Fund Advisory Council and the state EMS Advisory Council. During his last year with the Department of Health, Rob worked for the Office of Emergency Planning serving as the Strategic National Stockpile Coordinator.

Rob has been involved with EMS for over 20 years and is an active paramedic. He also is adjunct faculty for the paramedic program at Union County College. Rob holds a Bachelor degree in Public Health and a Master of Public Policy from Rutgers University.

Don't hesitate to call on any member of our team – Bev Lynch, Rob, Pamela Passman, Christine Higgins and Lauren Myers, for any of your association questions or needs.

Coming up ...

2008

Thursday 6:30 pm	October 30	Fall Dinner/Membership Meeting Highlawn Pavilion, West Orange
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2009

Wednesday 11:00 am	March 4	Annual Scientific Meeting Nanina's In The Park, Belleville
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