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Welcome to the WOEMA WINDOW. This e-newsletter is sent to members by email on a monthly basis. The e-newsletter provides links to this page. Below are the items that appeared in the November 2019 issue.

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No events

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#### ACOEM House of Delegates Update

by Tony Biascan, MD

“Due to inclement weather affecting the Chicago O’Hare airport, our flight has been delayed . . . we apologize for the inconvenience.” Whispers of displeasure immediately rang throughout the gates from passengers texting away on their cellphones to notify others about the unexpected delays. Others made a spectacle of themselves, acting out their obvious frustration by demanding an immediate itinerary change from an airline agent feigning a caring smile while attempting to accommodate the passenger’s request. And so began the day for many delegates traveling to the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine House of Delegates (HOD) Meeting 2019. Yet despite Mother Nature’s best attempts at wreaking havoc on the meeting, many delegates prudently traveled the day prior and were able to partake in the annual ragtag networking dinner. And a cadre of highly determined and finely dressed representatives from the various components comprising the HOD assembled on the seventh floor of 25 Northwest Point Blvd, Elk Grove Village, IL ready to tackle the business at hand. Among them stood the Western Occupational and Environmental Medical Association (WOEMA) delegate “Dream Team” with Drs. Rupa Das, David McKinney, Leslie Israel and Tony Biascan present in person, while Drs. Robert Orford, Robert Blink, Stephen Levit, Chang Na, and Erik Won participated electronically on Zoom.

ACOEM’s president, Dr. Stephen Frangos, opened the HOD meeting with a presentation speaking to the following discussion points, namely membership and significance. He posed the question that hundreds of physicians practice occupational medicine and yet why are they not members of ACOEM? How do we reach them? And what is the value of an ACOEM membership if we cannot stay relevant in the ever-changing discussion of medicine? These questions merited an answer which could only be achieved, Dr. Frangos believed, through vigorous discussion. Dr. Beth Baker, ACOEM president-elect, followed with sobering data demonstrating a 15-year decrease in membership, coupled with a subsequent decrease in revenues and an increasing rise in general accounting costs. Membership Committee Chair Dr. Laura Gillis stated that there are 4,600 board certified OEM in practice. Of these practicing physicians, 3,500 are members, a gap of approximately 1100 who are not members. She further commented on the 2018-2019 retention rate of 76%, a decrease from 80%. 45% of physicians in our field are 60 years and above in age. Following these addresses, Dr. Richard Wagoner was elected HOD recorder and deliberation ensued on the following HOD resolutions.

#### ***Resolution 19S-04-MWG – Physician Members Modification–Tabled***

This resolution was intended to create a new membership category called “Non-Residency Trained Member”, state licensed physicians who are not currently in a residency program nor have completed any residency and are within 10 year of the date of internship completion. Fees for this new category would reflect the same fee structure as the “Resident Member” category. The HOD expressed concerns about whether this resolution would “carve out” a “niche” physician category and expressed concerns that other under-represented and poorly compensated groups, such as public health physicians, were also deserving of a reduced fee but were not included. The HOD proposed an amendment to modify the time period for this reduced rate to 4 years following internship after discussing that 10 years is too long a period. The HOD also expressed concerns that by reducing fees, this resolution would have an adverse financial impact on ACOEM. A discussion of other inducements to membership included a 3-month trial at a nominal cost or a 3-year reduced rate for new-entrant physicians to the field. While the HOD agreed with this resolution in spirit, it concluded that this resolution required further refinement and a final vote was tabled.

#### ***Resolution 19F-01-EA – ACOEM representation by residents and young physicians–Approved***

This resolution proposed that ACOEM fully fund both a resident Delegate and Alternate Delegate to attend the both the Annual and Interim meetings of the AMA with the funding being provided by the Board of Directors (BOD) and remaining funding from the Resident and Recent Graduate (RRG) section. The RRG expressed that this resolution would create a pipeline for future ACOEM members versed in AMA governance and increase our seat at the table within the House of Medicine. Several HOD

members spoke to the learning curve needed, both within ACOEM and once seated at the AMA level, to become effective at the AMA. There was some discussion about the financial impact of this resolution, but shared responsibility from BOD and RRG mitigated this concern. The HOD voted to approve the resolution.

### ***The Underlying Dilemma of Membership and Maintaining OEM Relevancy***

Current Speaker of the HOD and WOEMA member Dr. Scott Levy concluded the day's agenda by citing his concern which thematically echoed throughout the day, "Are we in danger of becoming a medical specialty society without medical specialists?" Several Components are currently in danger of reducing or losing their delegation altogether based on dwindling membership numbers.

While citing the decreasing numbers of member, Dr. Baker stated that there is a member needs assessment tool that could give ACOEM feedback for improving the value of membership. Dr. Gillis reported that the Membership Committee is actively drafting a strategic plan comprised of a working group that is focused on the issue of retention and recruitment of younger OEM physicians to fill the void. She provided other ideas, such as working with Components, medical specialties, and the alignment with other subspecialties. Mr. Bill Bruce, ACOEM chief executive officer, discussed working with the Urgent Care Association and with NIOSH on total worker health initiatives and provided updates on the newly transformed ACOEM website geared towards becoming more user friendly. He cited changes such as converting the website to a public site, the development of a membership portal, and simplification of the directory along with the ACOEM community pages sections, components, governance. Dr. Levy spoke on leadership development, House apportionment and marketing as avenues for increasing membership. He directed the HOD members to return to their respective Components to bring "outside the box thinking" to the table and challenged the HOD with one last question, "Are we leading or managing?"

Brought in from the Chicagoland cold, attending the HOD meeting is a chance to network with members from across the nation, to hear their concerns for our specialty, and to create solutions to the issues affecting occupational medicine. To preserve our College and its relevance in medicine, however, our challenge as WOEMA and ACOEM members is to expand our leadership role amongst our OEM peers and those medical specialists with whom we practice, to recruit the next generation of OEM physicians and mentor their growth, and to support our fellow Components through the realignment process.



## **VACCINIA CASE PUBLISHED IN MMWR**

WOEMA Member **Dr. Marcia Isakari**, authored a case: *"Novel Treatment of a VacciniaVirus Infection from an Occupational Needlestick"* published in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR). Click below to read the case!

[\[READ NOW\]](#)



## UCSF RESIDENT NNENNA OKOYE, MD PRESENTS POSTER ON B-READER PROGRAM PERCEPTIONS

WOEMA invited nine residents from across the U.S. to attend WOHC as scholars and to participate in the annual Resident Poster Competition. Nnenna Okoye, MD presented a poster: *"Perceptions on the B Reader Program Among Current Radiology Resident Physicians: a United States Survey"*. The poster submission highlighted research conducted by Nnenna Okoye, MD, MPH, Samuel Goldman MD, MPH (University of California, San Francisco) and Anke Hemmerling, MD, PhD, MPH at (University of California, Berkeley).

The study aimed to characterize physicians' attitudes on the B Reader Program and its certification process, in light of the significant need for additional B Readers in the United States. The authors focused on perceptions held by current radiology resident physicians of ACGME-accredited radiology residency program regarding the national B Reader program (the medical surveillance program led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). The study also assessed the extent of interest among radiology resident physicians in a focused web-based training course covering competencies related to the B Reader certification process.

[\[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE POSTER\]](#)

Nnenna Okoye, MD, MPH is a resident physician in her final year at the UCSF Occupational and Environmental Medicine program. She has a B.S. from Tufts University in Biology and Biomedical Engineering Systems. She was born in Vienna, Austria and is a dual US-Austrian citizen. She is also of Nigerian descent. She is grateful for the mentorship from the UCSF faculty and for having shared her residency with twelve wonderful resident colleagues.

WOHC  
2020

## WOHC 2020 IS SET FOR SEPTEMBER 23-26 IN LONG BEACH, CA: THE PLANNING HAS BEGUN!

*by Troy Ross, MD, WOEMA Window Editor*

This month the committee that plans WOEMA's annual conference started its work. The September 2020 Occupational and Environmental Medicine conference is going to be great! How do I know? Well, because I had the pleasure of being involved with the planning.

Here's something that you might not be aware of – the planning committee is made up of WOEMA members just like you. The good news is that each and every one of you can be involved and would be welcomed in to join the committee. Moving forward, the committee will be broken down into groups of a few people for each topic. Those groups will find the expert presenters and work with them to develop the programs.

Would you like to be an influencer in your professional community? Do you have an itch to help improve the OEM world that you practice in? The commitment is minimal. The payback is immense and satisfying.

Come join us- the timing is just right to find a topic you're interested in and help.

Dr. Tony Biascan is our conference Chair, and I know he won't mind me sending you his direction with your offer to be a part. His home address and phone number are .... (oops, no doxing here). Seriously, though, please consider being a part. I guarantee you will enjoy it and get satisfaction when you see your work go to producing a great conference that attendees enjoy.

Contact the WOEMA staff at [WOEMA@woema.org](mailto:WOEMA@woema.org). If you have any questions I can field, feel free to contact me directly at [nvoccdoc@gmail.com](mailto:nvoccdoc@gmail.com).



The planning committee for the 64th Annual Western Occupational Health Conference met on November 9 in Long Beach to select speakers and topics. Pictured in front from left: Dr. Troy Ross and Dr. Tony Biascan (chair); Back row from left: Dr. Alya Khan, Dr. David Caretto, Dr. Erik Won, Dr. Sheri Belafsky (vice chair), Dr. Paul Papanek, Dr. Rosalie Banasiak, Dr. Ashley Ennedy, and Dr. Rupa Das.



## PERSONALIZED NUTRITION IN PRIMARY CARE 2019: A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE AT UCLA ON DECEMBER 7

As the practice of medicine grows in the new century, there's a better appreciation for seeing people as being more than an accumulation of organ systems or a list of disease conditions.

With that in mind, [here is a conference for practitioners](#) that can help build that understanding of the patient as a whole person.

And one doesn't have to look far to discover easy to access top-notch learning. Look [here for other opportunities](#).



## 38TH ANNUAL COEH SYMPOSIUM SACRAMENTO, CA – JANUARY 24-25

Registration is open for **COEH Builds Bridges: Warehouses, Wildfires, and Workplace Injuries** taking place in Sacramento, CA from January 24-25, 2020

COEH Builds Bridges was launched in 2017 and rotates biannually between Berkeley and Sacramento. This event is a merger of the 42nd Annual UC Berkeley Lela Morris Symposium, and 38th Annual UC Davis Occupational & Environmental Medicine Symposium. This year the symposium will be held on the Sacramento Campus of UC Davis Health in the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing.

**[\[LEARN MORE & REGISTER\]](#)**

WOEMA is a regional component of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM) and is dedicated to high-quality medical care and ethical principles governing the practice of occupational medicine.

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