



ELECTION ISSUE

STRENGTHENING THE VOICE OF HEALTH CARE
RIMS continues to find ways to support physicians' interest in political activism.
PAGE 4

RIMS CAMPAIGN SCHOOL PAYING DIVIDENDS
A look back at last year's Campaign School seminar at RIMS which has encouraged several physicians to run for public office in this year.
PAGE 5

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BRINGS HUGE POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE MANY ASPECTS OF HEALTH CARE DELIVERY
PAGE 6

ANNUAL RIMS DINNER & INSTALLATION OF NEW OFFICERS
Scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 18, at the Agawam Hunt Country Club in Rumford, RI. The evening will include a presentation of the Dr. Charles L. Hill Award to Dr. Arun K. Singh.
For more information, e-mail to: shamilton@rimed.org

RIMS CHARITY GOLF
The 10th Annual RIMS Charity Golf Classic is set for Monday, September 20 at the Agawam Hunt course in Rumford, RI. For more information and to register, contact Steve DeTroy at 331-3207.

WANTED: A FEW GOOD E-MAIL ADDRESSES
Many RIMS members still do not have e-mail addresses in our data base. Please help us to keep you better informed by contacting us with your correct e-mail address. Send a note to: shamilton@rimed.org, and we'll update your information accordingly.

New medicine for Rhode Island politics

Doctors are running for public office

SEPTEMBER 14 PRIMARY IS CRUCIAL TEST FOR PHYSICIANS AND HEALTH CARE RELATED CANDIDATES

Physicians in some parts of Rhode Island are in for an unaccustomed treat as the 2004 political season enters the home stretch: they will have an opportunity to vote for new candidates who understand medicine and medical practice from the inside.

Six physicians, one social worker and a physician's spouse are running for elective office in Rhode Island this fall. These candidates are seeking seats in the Rhode Island House, the Rhode Island Senate and in the Town Councils of North Kingstown and Warwick.

Thus, several graduates of the Medical Society's first campaign school ("Getting Elected 101" held at RIMS in November 2003) are making their mark.

The three physician candidates for the House of Representatives face primary election contests on Tuesday, September 14.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY RACES

David Ashley, MD Democrat House District 32 (North Kingstown)

David Ashley is a family physician with a practice at 1351 South County Trail in East Greenwich. He is running as a Democrat for an open seat in House District 32 (North Kingstown). Dr. Ashley faces Dale Grogan in the September 14 Democratic primary election. The winner of the primary election will take on Republican candidate Laurence Ehrhardt in the general elections on Nov 2.

Dr. Ashley earned his undergraduate and medical degrees at Brown University and did his residency in family medicine at Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island. He is the husband of Karen Blackmer, MD.

His campaign website is www.DocAshley.com. District 32 has been represented for the past 14 years by Melvoid Benson, who announced earlier this year that she would not run again.



David Ashley, MD



Joseph Spinale, DO



Nicholas Tsiongas, MD



**RHODE ISLAND
MEDICAL SOCIETY**

PRESIDENT

Tilak K. Verma, MD, MBA

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Fredric V. Christian, MD

VICE-PRESIDENT

R. Scott Hanson, MD, MPH

SECRETARY

Diane R. Siedlecki, MD

TREASURER

Francis X. Basile, MD

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

David B. Ettensohn, MD

AMA DELEGATES

Arthur A. Frazzano, MD
Michael Migliori, MD

RIMS WEBSITE

www.rimed.org

RHODE ISLAND MEDICAL NEWS

is the newsletter of the Rhode Island Medical Society 235 Promenade St., Ste. 500 Providence, RI 02908 Tel: 401-331-3207 Fax: 401-751-8050 E-mail: rims@rimed.org

EDITOR

Newell Warde, PhD

The Rhode Island Medical Society was founded in 1812 to promote the art and science of medicine. RIMS is the eighth oldest state medical association in the country.

In cooperation with the Brown University School of Medicine, Rhode Island Quality Partners, Inc., Rhode Island Chapter of ACP/ASIM, and the Rhode Island Department of Health, the Society also publishes a monthly magazine, *Medicine and Health Rhode Island*.

From The President:

Tilak K. Verma, MD, MBA

Retrospective

Editor's note: As Dr. Tilak K. Verma's term as RIMS' President nears an end, we look back at portions of his inaugural address delivered at last year's Annual Banquet, September 19, 2003. Dr. Verma brought banquet goers to their feet with a stirring address that paid tribute to his predecessor, Dr. Ettensohn, and looked ahead with some pre-science. Portions of that address are reprinted here.

This has clearly been a watershed year for RIMS. David Ettensohn promised an eventful year, and he delivered. He humbly stated that he perceived his major strength as a rabble-rouser. And rouse us he did.

All of us know the accomplishments of the last 12 months, the highlights of which were an advertising campaign bringing attention to our plight, the [March 12, 2003, State House] rally, the networking with the politicians. And the payoffs were immediately felt — the 7% cut in our fees was stayed, our membership rose sharply, and, most importantly, our message is out there.

For this and everything else David Ettensohn has achieved for us through his memorable and powerful oratory, we owe him our enormous gratitude. Surely, he has led us to the battlefield like a fearless general.

And now we must take charge from him and forge ahead. We have our work cut out for us. I needn't tell you the shape we are in. It isn't good.

There are many seemingly, insurmountable obstacles. But we will have to fight. In the end I believe we will be successful. It will, however, need all of our efforts. David Ettensohn, Rick Christian and I cannot do it alone. We need your help.

The battle lines are drawn. We must wage a campaign for tort reform, for better reimbursement and a climate that attracts good physicians to our state. Unless we fight for this change, it will not happen for us.

In a recent article titled "Physician Discontent" in *JAMA*, it was stated that we are unhappy, and (I quote) "Strategies to ease pressure include increased use and enhanced scope of non-physician clini-



TILAK K. VERMA, MD, MBA

cians, adoption of information technology and disease management programs to increase efficiency and quality and thoughtful design." Whoa!

Well, that may be accurate. But let me tell you that tort reform and better reimbursement are the designs I am looking for.

Now a quick SWOT analysis. This is a business tool to evaluate the "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats" facing an organization. Rather than a glitzy power point presentation I will quote Shakespeare from *Julius Caesar*:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, when taken at the flood,
leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat.
And we must take the current
when it serves
Or lose our ventures.*

Translation: we must strike now and keep up the momentum.

Finally, I can predict for you the pattern our campaign will follow. Mahatma Gandhi spelled it out years ago: "First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you. Then they fight you. Then you win."

Well, they have ignored us and laughed at us. Now is the time to fight. But in the end, we will win.

Physicians running for political office

FROM FRONT PAGE

Howard E. Schulman, MD Democrat

House of Representatives, District 3
Dr. Schulman is a general internist practicing at 176 Tollgate Road in Warwick. He is running as a Democrat for the House of Representatives in District 3, on Providence's East Side. His campaign website is www.GoTellHoward.com. He will face a 5-term incumbent, Edith Ajello, in the Democratic primary on September 14. The winner of the primary will face Republican Thomas Pizzuti on November 2.

Nick Tsiongas, MD, MPH Democrat

State Representative District 70
Dr. Tsiongas is an internist specializing in occupational medicine. He is running as a Democrat for the House of Representatives in District 70 (Portsmouth, Tiverton). In contrast to Drs. Schulman and Ashley, Dr. Tsiongas is not a new-comer to politics. He served four terms (1985 to 1993) in the House, representing the Mount Hope and Summit neighborhoods on the East Side of Providence. Former gubernatorial candidates Tony Pires and Sheldon Whitehouse participated in Dr. Tsiongas' campaign kick-off in Tiverton last June. Dr. Tsiongas faces Jay Edwards in the Democratic primary on September 14. The winner will face three-term incumbent Republican Joseph Amaral.

Barry Fain State Senate District 3

Barry Fain is a well-known community leader and a publisher of the *East Side Monthly*. He is the husband of Elaine Fain, MD. As the sole Independent candidate, Mr. Fain faces no primary on September 14. His opponent in the November election will be the winner of the Democratic primary between seven-term incumbent Rhoda Perry and her Democratic challenger Christopher Young. Well-wishers can contact the Fain Campaign by email at FainforSenate@aol.com. The campaign

website will be available at FainforSenate.org.

In addition,

Diane Giarrusso Republican

House Dist. 42 (Cranston, Johnston)
Diane Giarrusso is a clinical social worker. As the sole Republican candidate for the seat, she will face the winner of a three-way Democratic primary. The Democrats are two-term incumbent Mary Cerra and challengers Vincent Russo and Stephen Ucci.

Town Council races

Jonathan Bertman, MD Democrat

Town Council, North Kingstown
Dr. Bertman practices family medicine at 1111 Main Street in Hope Valley. He is running as a Democrat for Town Council in North Kingstown. He has no opponent in the September 14 primary and therefore definitely will be on the ballot in November. His campaign website is docbertman.com.

Joseph Spinale, DO Republican

Town Council, Warwick
Dr. Spinale is a cardiologist practicing at 400 Bald Hill Road. He is a Republican candidate for Town Council in Warwick. His campaign website is www.ward9gop.org.

Mark Schwager, MD Democrat

City Council, East Greenwich
Mark Schwager is an internist and president of the University Medical Group. He has a clinical practice in East Greenwich, where he has lived with his wife Patricia for ten years. They have three children at E. Greenwich High School. Dr. Schwager's campaign address is: mschwag@cox.net.



Jonathan Bertman, MD



Mark Schwager, MD



Diane Giarrusso



Barry Fain



RIMS working to amplify the voice of health care in RI

The Medical Society and RIMPAC strongly encourage physicians to become engaged in the political process at the highest level they find supportable and appropriate for them personally, whether simply by contributing to RIMPAC, AMPAC and specialty PACs, or involving themselves actively in support of a candidate, or actually running for public office themselves.

This is the essence of the professional obligation articulated in Principle VII of the AMA's *Principles of Medical Ethics*: "A physician shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health."

And, of course, all physicians and their families should be informed voters in the primary elections (September 14) and the general elections (November 2). The health care professionals who currently serve in the General Assembly have proven to be highly committed and effective legislators.

Representative Arthur Corvese, an optometrist; Representative Peter Ginaitt, a registered nurse and EMT; Representative Roger Picard, a social worker; Senator Leo Blais, a pharmacist; and Senator Joseph Polisena, a registered nurse and former EMT, have all played immensely helpful roles in promoting enlightened public policy at the State House over the years, based upon their superior knowledge and understanding health care.

All of these incumbents are running for reelection. Helping them return to office and sending them additional reinforcements are top priorities of RIMPAC this fall.

Physician activism part of a Rhode Island trend

In the general elections of 2002, 42% of seats in the Rhode Island General Assembly were uncontested. This year, 22% are uncontested.

In part, this change reflects the fact that more Republicans and Independents have filed to challenge some of the Democrats, who currently hold 84% of Assembly seats, giving Rhode Island the nation's most lopsided legislature. (Idaho is second, with a legislature that is almost as overwhelmingly Republican as Rhode Island's is Democratic.)

Governor Carcieri personally recruited some of this year's Republican candidates, and he remains committed to "party building."

Most of this year's physician candidates have chosen to run as Democrats, for strategic as much as for ideological reasons, in some cases. The fact remains that in Rhode Island, party affiliation does not necessarily reflect ideology. Some of the most socially conservative members of the General Assembly are Democrats, and Rhode Island Republicans, like their brethren throughout the Northeast, tend to be moderates or centrists.

The long campaign trail

All of the candidates named above have already put enormous effort into their races and cleared several hurdles, including the formalities of filing, gathering signatures, meeting various deadlines, and conferring with party powerbrokers.

A visit to their websites shows that they all have well articulated views not only on health care, but on the whole range of issues that Rhode Islanders care about, including highway safety, schools, public transportation, gambling casinos, taxes, affordable housing and the full gamut of local issues. Such breadth is one key to political success.

Another key is money. The Rhode Island Medical Political Action Committee (RIMPAC), Chaired by Dr. L. Anthony Cirillo, offered "scholarships" to graduates of the RIMS Campaign School. RIMPAC and other state medical specialty PACs are providing other campaign support to friends of medicine.

Physicians and their families are encouraged to contact these campaigns and offer whatever support is needed. All of the candidates face difficult races, and all of the House candidates must survive the September 14 primaries.

RIMPAC

RIMPAC's goal: "40 in '04"

RIMPAC Chair Dr. Anthony Cirillo set an ambitious goal at the beginning of this year: "40 in '04," i.e. raising forty thousand dollars to support friends of medicine in the 2004 election campaigns. As of August 1, RIMPAC had achieved about 75% of that goal.

In addition to providing important support to RIMPAC and several medical specialty PACs, several physicians have been commendably active in organizing and hosting special events to support key office holders.

RIMS installs new leadership team

Dr. Fredric Christian will become President of the Rhode Island Medical Society on September 18, succeeding Dr. Tilak Verma. Dr. Kathleen Fitzgerald will become President-Elect. Dr. Barry Wall will become Vice President.

Dr. Christian is a cardiologist, Chair of RIMS' Membership Committee and a founding member of RIMS' Competence Committee.

Dr. Fitzgerald is a gynecologist and has long served as Chair of RIMS' Public Laws Committee. Dr. Wall is a past president of the RI Psychiatric Society and represents RIPS on the RIMS Council.

Dr. Diane Siedlecki and Dr. Francis Basile were reelected Secretary and Treas-



Incoming officers for RIMS include (from left to right): Dr. Fredric V. Christian, President; Dr. Kathleen Fitzgerald, President-elect; Dr. Barry Wall, Vice-president.

Dr. Michael Migliori was reelected Delegate to the AMA. Dr. Colleen Cleary was reelected Alternate Delegate.

Dr. Michael Macko was elected Alternate Delegate to the AMA. Dr. K. Nicholas Tsiongas and Dr. Charles Pattavina were reelected Councilors-at-Large. Dr. Vera DePalo and Dr. Samir

Shah were newly elected Councilors-at-Large.

The RIMS Council elected the Society's 2004-2005 officers, standing committees, and part of RI's AMA Delegation and at the Council's regular August meeting. (AMA Delegates and Alternates serve 2-year, staggered terms. All other terms of office are one year.)



The Honorable Charles Norwood (D-GA) was the keynote speaker for the seminar (pictured at left with RIMPAC Chair Dr. Anthony Cirrillo). State Senator Elizabeth Roberts, Representative Arthur Corvese (center) and RI Lt. Governor Charles Fogerty also made presentations and talked with audience members.

RIMS CAMPAIGN SCHOOL

Supporting physicians' political activism

The surge of health care professionals in electoral politics is one measure of the success of the Medical Society's day-long course "Getting Elected 101," which RIMS first offered in November 2003.

The three physician candidates and the social worker running for the General Assembly are all graduates of that first RIMS campaign school, and the other candidates were inspired by it.

The school received enthusiastic reviews for quality and value from its 43 registrants.

The premise of the RIMS campaign school was two-fold. First, the profession and the public are well served when physicians and other health care profes-

sionals bring their values and their experience to the process of making public policy.

Second, just one physician in the General Assembly would be in an influential position to exercise leadership and serve as a resource for other members of the legislature on issues relating to health care and medical economics.

Since General Assembly members serve part-time and have virtually no staff or research support, they rely heavily upon each other for expertise and judgment on the issues.

No physician has served in the Rhode Island General Assembly in over a decade.



Delivering Information Technology

Most people in the field agree that information technology (IT) has the potential to dramatically improve the quality, safety and efficiency of health care delivery in RI.

But what exactly is IT?

As it pertains to health care, IT is the integration of current and emerging information technologies to create a dynamic and interactive communication system among the many components of a provider system.

A fully developed IT system has the ca-

pability of connecting all parts of a health care organization including billing, patient registration and monitoring, electronic health records, filmless imaging, laboratory results reporting, prescription drug fulfillment, document management and much more.

And perhaps most important, the cumulative access to real time data from multiple sources will provide an unprecedented decision support resource for physicians and

all health care professionals.

RIMS will feature ongoing articles and website resources pertaining to advances in information technology as it affects physicians and health care professionals.



The Language Of Information Technology

Electronic Health Record (EHR)

Part of an automated order-entry and patient-tracking system providing real-time data access.

Computerized Provider Order Entry (CPOE)

Typically an ordering and fulfillment system. More advanced versions will include lab orders, radiology studies, procedures, discharges, transfers and referrals.

Clinical Decision Support System (CDSS)

Provides doctors nurses with real-time diagnostic and treatment recommendations.

Bar Coding

Similar to bar coding in other environments. An optical scanner is used to capture data encoded on a variety of items.

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)

Tracks patients throughout the hospital, and links labs and medication tracking via a wireless communications system.

Automated Dispensing Machines (ADMs)

Controls distribution of medication doses

Interoperability

Refers to electronic communication among

organizations so that the data in one IT system can be incorporated into another. **Picture Archiving Communication (PACS)** Technology saves and disseminates diagnostic and radiological images from various devices including x-ray and MRI. **Electronic Materials Management (EMM)** Used to track and manage inventory of medical supplies, pharmaceuticals and other materials.

Source: MedPac Report to the Congress: New Approaches in Medicare June 2004

RIMS Interview

RI's Quality Institute steering information technology initiatives

The Quality Institute was incorporated in 2002 as an organization with a clear cut mission: to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of health care in Rhode Island. CEO Laura Adams had been a longtime faculty member with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement in Boston before being hired to help launch the Quality Institute in RI. Laura Adams talked with RIMS recently about the QI, and its role in implementing information technology in the state's health care industry.



Quality Institute CEO
Laura Adams

RIMS: Is QI a technology organization?

Laura Adams: We did not start out as an information technology organization. But, we feel very strongly that one of the fundamental elements in our mission is to move away from the current paper-based system, which makes it difficult to measure quality and effectiveness.

RIMS: Where do you see information technology having the biggest impact on Rhode Island health care in the near future?

Laura Adams: Clinical decision support is far and away the biggest gain. Doctors need the full picture of a patient's history, and the information must be electronically organized so that it can be accessed on demand. The decision support aspect will be very interactive and draw on many sources of real time data

RIMS: IT is a vast field. Where are you investing your time and resources today?

Laura Adams: We chose electronic prescribing as our first project. We began our pilot in June of 2003 with about 40 prescribers using a web-based system. The beta testing went extremely well. We saw a big reduction in the amount of clarification phone calls to doctors from the pharmacies.

RIMS: How does Rhode Island compare to other states in the

region or across the country in the use of IT in healthcare?

Laura Adams: In terms of electronic prescribing, we currently have the deepest penetration in the country of doctors connected into their pharmacies electronically. As for the overall deployment of healthcare IT, RI's size will give us a big advantage as we move forward in building the data sharing network.

RIMS: Is your work directed at physicians only?

Laura Adams: Currently, we are working with hospitals and physicians. But, eventually, all healthcare professionals in the state.

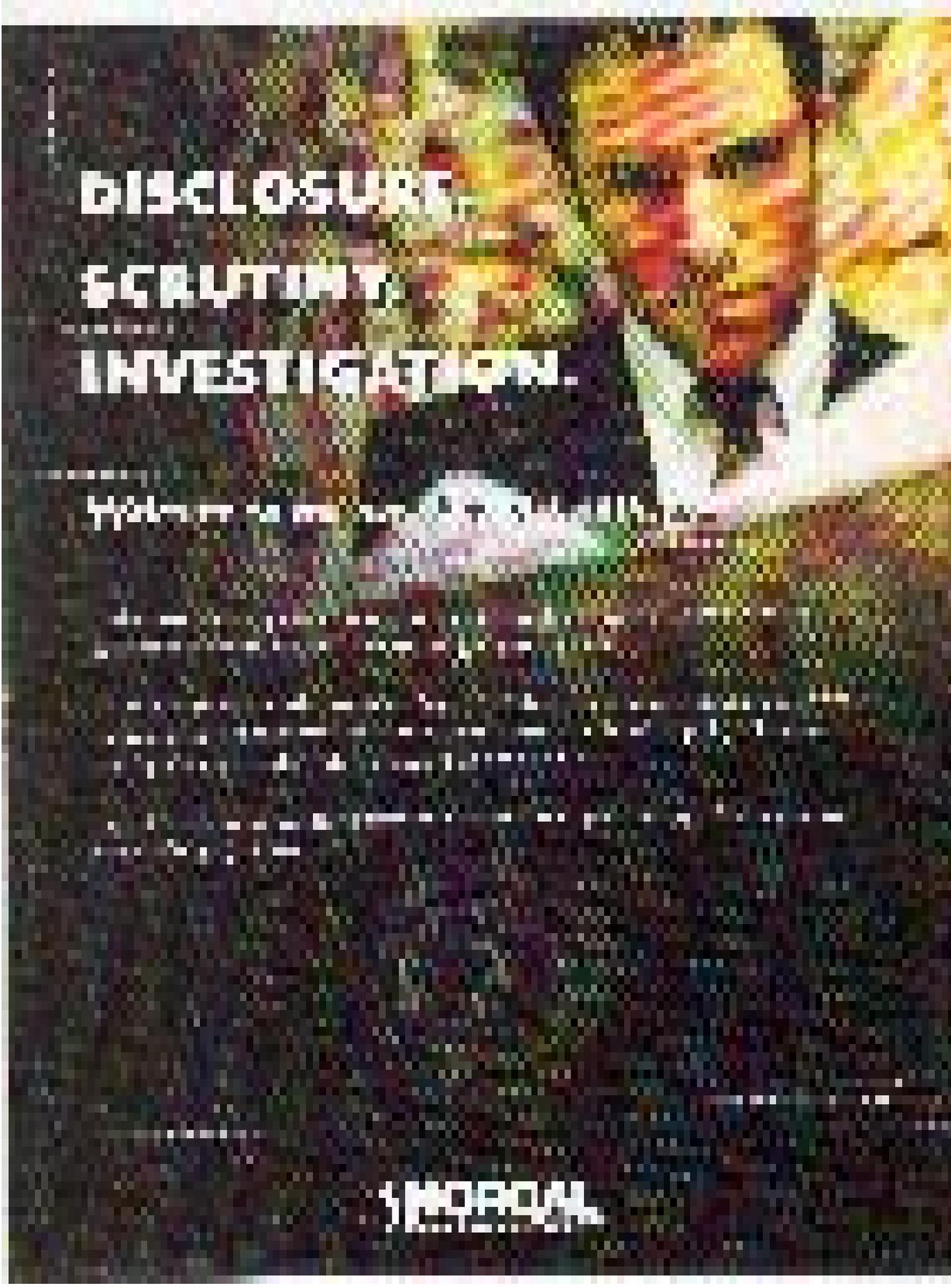
RIMS: Understanding the difficulties in getting multiple providers to agree to roles and responsibilities in a data sharing network, how do you plan to get people together?

Laura Adams: This will be the greatest challenge - getting people to agree; governance issues, who owns the data, and how the data travels around the network. These are key issues which are being mapped out and discussed with physicians in a very open forum. And, it isn't just about the technology. It is the incentive structure to help physicians use the system.

RIMS: What advice would you have for doctors who are currently looking to purchase IT-related equipment or systems?

Laura Adams: It is important that physicians understand how their equipment may (or may not) link up with the greater information exchange system. We encourage doctors to contact QI. Our clinical IT group is doing a tremendous amount of legwork - listening to physicians, and evaluating companies in the market. We are developing a short list of companies which meet the technology standards and criteria set up by the physicians.

The Quality Institute will be an important source of health care technology information and resource for RIMS members. Laura Adams invites interested physicians to contact her directly to get on the QI mailing list and clinical IT list serve for ongoing information. E-mail Laura Adams at: ladams@riqi.org.



DISCLOSURE SCAUTINY INVESTIGATION

How much do you know about the candidates?

The state's voters will be asked to elect a new governor and lieutenant governor in the November election. The candidates are: Governor-elect Donald Carcillo and Lieutenant Governor-elect Joseph Paoli, Jr. (R); Governor-elect Douglas M. Crish and Lieutenant Governor-elect Robert J. DeStefano (D); Governor-elect James G. Thompson and Lieutenant Governor-elect Robert J. DeStefano (I).

THOMPSON



Looking For A Good Deal On Employee Benefits?



The Right Partner Can Make All The Difference

The Rhode Island Medical Society's Insurance Brokerage Corporation (IBC) has formed a partnership with The Good Neighbor Alliance Corporation to provide complete employee health and benefits packages.

The Good Neighbor Alliance Corporation provides a full range of employee benefit products including:

- Health
- Dental
- Life Insurance
- Disability
- Worker's Compensation
- Long-term Care
- Pension Plans
- Tax Saving Section 125 Plans

Let the best in the business take care of your employee benefit needs.

800-462-1910 or 401-467-2880



The Good Neighbor Alliance Corporation

Specializing In Employee Benefits Since 1982

Rhode Island Medical News

235 Promenade Street Suite 500
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

