

JOSEPH LIFRAK, MD, is President of the Rhode Island Orthopedic Society. **RICHARD TEREK, MD**, is Vice President. **GREG AUSTIN, MD**, is Secretary/Treasurer. Members At Large are **ANTHONY MECHREFE, MD**, **SIDNEY MIGLIORI, MD**, and **ERIC WALSH, MD**.

DIETER POHL, MD, is President of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American College of Surgeons.

STEVEN MIGLIORI, MD, is President-Elect. **JENNIFER GASS, MD**, is Treasurer. **ERIK ENQUIST, MD**, is Secretary. **MARLENE CUTITAR, MD**, is Immediate Past President.

CHARLES PATTAVINA, MD, will receive the prestigious James D. Mills Outstanding Contribution to Emergency Medicine Award of the American College of Emergency Physicians on Thursday, September 30, in the context of the ACEP's annual Scientific Assembly in Las Vegas, September 28–October 1. The award is named for one of the founders of the ACEP.

L. ANTHONY CIRILLO, MD, will become Chair of the State Legislative and Regulatory Committee of the American College of Emergency Physicians when the ACEP holds its annual Scientific Assembly in Las Vegas, September 28–October 1.

PHILIP R. RIZZUTO, MD, will receive the prestigious Secretariat Award of the American Academy of Ophthalmology in the context

of the AAO's Annual Meeting in Chicago, October 16–19. The Secretariat Award recognizes special contributions to the Academy and to ophthalmology. In particular, AAO will recognize Dr. Rizzuto for exemplary efforts as a member of the AAO's Secretariat for State Affairs, as President of the Rhode Island Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons and as a teacher and mentor of residents, among other contributions.

STEVEN R. DETOY, RIMS' Director of Government Relations and Public Affairs, has been named to the fifteen-member Federation Staff Advisory Steering Committee of the AMA Practice Management Center. The Center provides advocacy on payment issues, practical assistance to medical offices, and timely information to medical society staff on medical practice issues. Mr. DeToy is also a founding member of the Executive Committee of the AMA's Advocacy Resource Center.

NEWELL E. WARDE, PHD, RIMS' Executive Director, was elected by his state medical society peers in June to chair the Executive Committee of the Litigation Center. The Center, a joint undertaking of the AMA and the medical societies of every state and the District of Columbia, was established in 1995 to advance physicians' rights through the judicial system. It has participated in more than 200 legal cases.

Budget – continued

RIMS vs. tanning salons and sugary drinks

RIMS initiated two other timely public health measures that failed narrowly because of the abbreviated Assembly session and will be back on RIMS' legislative agenda next year. One measure would have barred persons under the age of 18 from patronizing tanning salons. Jason Neustadter, MD, a resident in dermatology, led the charge for this legislation. His worthy efforts were the subject of a front-page feature article in the Providence Journal on July 5, 2010.

RIMS also introduced a bill to tax sugar-added drinks. This bill attracted support from more than twenty organizations that share the Medical Society's concern about American dietary habits and the related epidemic of obesity. It also attracted vehement opposition from the beverage industry, which launched a well-funded campaign of radio and print advertising and whipped up "anti-tax" chatter on the radio talk show circuit. RIMS' bill was given a lengthy hearing by the House Finance Committee. In the end, however, the opposition succeeded in killing the bill. RIMS and a growing coalition will bring it back in 2011.

Professional liability

This year's efforts on liability reform met with disappointment as well. One might have hoped that RIMS' legislation to protect open communication between doctors and patients when outcomes disappoint (commonly known as the "I'm sorry" bill) would have stood a good chance of passage this year in the wake of last summer's high-profile case involving the family of actor James Woods and Kent County Hospital. But while the bill did receive a reasonable hearing in House Judiciary Committee, the Senate did not deign to follow suit.

The usurious prejudgment interest rate that Rhode Island law applies to medical liability settlements and awards (12%) received diligent attention once again this year. Inappropriately frozen in law for decades now at an artificially high level, the prejudgment interest rate remains a significant driver of process delays and high cost. Unfortunately, much like RIMS' "I'm sorry" legislation, this year's interest bill received a serious hearing on the House side but met a firm stone wall in the Senate.

As always when liability reform bills are heard in the General Assembly, it can be impressive to observe the intellectual creativity, rhetorical elegance and mulish intransigence of the plaintiff bar as they fiercely defend their lush turf.



Senator Sheldon Whitehouse with RIMS President Vera De Palo, MD, at the Rhode Island Health Care Stakeholders meeting in Washington, DC, on July 14.