



**GARY BUBBY, MD
PRESIDENT**

Time is flying by! As I write this, we are smack in the middle of December. After a great summer and gentle transition through fall, we are easing into another winter. With New Year's approaching, we naturally

reflect back and look ahead, so this is a perfect vantage point on the trail to update you on our activities.

The **Annual Meeting** on October 2 at the Squantum Club was terrific. All who attended had extremely positive feedback about the event! We had inspiring speeches from our award recipients, **Drs. David Etnensohn and Caroline Troise**. We thanked **Dr. Vera De Palo** for her fantastic efforts as outgoing President, and she officially transferred the gavel to my hands. Add in great food, wine, music and dancing in a very warm venue, and you could not help but have a really nice evening. Seems like I barely finished savoring that experience, though, before presiding over my first Council meeting less than 48 hours later.

October 4th Council meeting

We introduced the concept of going green with electronic council handbooks to help reduce expenses for the organization. We also asked Council members to send in a picture and brief bio for the website, since we have several new faces on board. This also seems to be an obvious means of identifying any conflicts of interest representatives may have. We voted to keep dues level for the seventh year in a row, and amended our bylaws to add the AMA alternate delegate to the Executive Committee. We updated the group on the status of the provider tax appeal, which was in the hands of Judge Robert Pirraglia (more below).

November 1st Executive Committee meeting

We had a pretty animated discussion about the prior authorization topic, intensified by BCBSRI's decision to remove the radiologists from the pre-auth permission loop.

Gamm Theater

For those of you who joined us for the **Gamm Theater** evening on November 4th, I think you will agree the evening was a success. The Gamm is a neat hole in the wall, hidden gem of a place that put on an excellent production of *Mauritius*. We had a nice reception before the show,

with a little talk from Tony Estrella, the artistic director of the Gamm. It was actually a nice networking, feel good experience. The show itself was a pretty interesting tale that could have been worthy of CME credits for negotiating skills...profuse thanks to **Drs. Adrain and Cutitar, Sarah Stevens**, and **Steve DeToy**, collectively known as the "Not Golf Committee" for organizing the event. Look for more events to follow this spring and summer....

The AMA interim meeting took place in early November. Rhode Island was well represented with Peter Hollmann filling in for Mike Migliori as our delegate. Other Rhode Islanders present included strong medical student showing from Steve Lee and Gene Cone, Barry Wall as delegate for the psychiatric society, and Stuart Gitlow representing the society of addiction medicine. Newell Warde did an excellent job running the meeting for the AMA Litigation Center. He received compliments from AMA president Cecil Wilson for his work, so well done Newell! As you may know, the interim meeting focuses on advocacy issues. There were heated debates on a number of controversial issues in the reference committees and on the floor, including resolutions on the health care impact of same sex marriages, and statements related to the mandates for insurance coverage in the PPACA...one resolution snuck through on medical marijuana research, seemingly after more controversial items consumed people...it was pretty entertaining sport for a while...and I have to say I was impressed with the testimony of our medical students Steve Lee, Gene Cone and one of our young physician members, Adam Levine, who was there for Massachusetts as one of the young physician section representatives, on a number of issues. We saw a lot of leadership potential in those individuals, and they really did a fine job of getting Rhode Island out there....

December 6th Council meeting

This was a memorable, animated discussion that focused on prior authorization requirements for advanced imaging. We had presentations by guest **Chris Koller**, Health Insurance Commissioner for Rhode Island, Nitin Damle, our president-elect, who gave the providers' perspective, and Peter Hollmann, Associate Medical Director for BCBSRI providing the insurers' perspective. There was no question from the Council's questions and comments that providers clearly feel the process is overly complex, and burdensome to the ordering physicians, both in primary care and the specialties. Mr. Koller also touched on the impact of new guidelines for contracting on hospital cost containment and his view of the insurance exchanges in PPACA.

The RIMS Public Laws Committee met on December 8th.

For those of you who have never been, this is open to the membership, and helps us develop our legislative agenda. This committee is chaired by Past-President

Michael Migliori. Mike and Steve DeToy help us navigate the process of legislation and regulation. Although we discussed dozens of issues, this year we are hoping to develop something to ease the burden of prior authorization. More to come on this.

We have continued our monthly meetings with **Dr. David Gifford, Director of Health.** We discuss more than a dozen topics ranging from the CMS audit of RIH, to the prescription monitoring program (reportedly six months away) to physician dispensing issues (follow the labeling rules and talk to your hospital pharmacist), to vaccination issues, reimbursement for HIV drugs, prior authorization (which he referred to as the wrong tool for the job) and legislative issues.

HealthRight

RIMS leadership also met with our own **Dr. Nick Tsiongas** to discuss HealthRight's mission and the future of RIMS' involvement with the organization. **Beth Lange** had been approached to serve—we asked for her to be a voting member of its Board of Directors. It looks likely this organization will be given a chance to get involved with the Health Insurance Exchange.

Provider Tax Appeal

Judge Pirraglia handed down his decision about the provider tax case. The verdict wasn't what we were hoping for, but not unexpected. In a well written 43-page statement, the Judge basically refuted our legal team's arguments. This was a painful lump to swallow. Although I had a fair amount of fire in my belly about continuing to appeal this decision, after looking at the odds of winning versus the continued cost, all of the plaintiffs and leadership agreed it was time to move on and cut our losses.

Minute Clinic

Our RIMS leadership team met with the leadership of Minute Clinic—Andrew Sussman, MD, President of Minute Clinic, an impressive internist and former Chief Medical Officer at the Brigham, and as of the October Council meeting, a RIMS member, and Tim Buono, VP of Business Development Minute Clinic. They are interested in adding 3–4 sites in Rhode Island, and are looking to collaborate with Rhode Island's medical community. Their presentation gave us an overview of their business plan, including their affiliation with Lifespan. They emphasized filling a void in access to health care that addresses the shortage of primary care providers. They dangled a few carrots like medical directorship opportunities and referral of new patients to those practices willing to take new patients...and mentioned a stick in the Federal Trade Commission if we try to block their entry...they have already met with some specialty groups within Rhode Island. We invited them to address the RIMS Council at our next meeting February

7th, 2011. We also specifically asked them to address the pediatric community's concerns and the points articulated in our white paper of 2008. Please advise your Council rep to attend this meeting and express any concerns you may have on this issue!!!

Other committees and work

I am also representing RIMS on the following committees: **Health Insurance Advisory Council** (chaired by Chris Koller), the **Medicaid Hospital Payment Study Commission**, the **Special Senate Commission to Study Cost Containment, Efficiency, and Transparency in the Delivery of Quality Patient Care and Access by Hospitals**, the **Rhode Island Health Promotion Policy Council** (at the request of Director Gifford), and **HealthCare Community Exchange Council** (of BCBSRI). I am doing this with input and feedback from Steve, Newell, and Nitin.

I have also volunteered at the **RI Free clinic** since our last Council meeting, and can attest to a very positive experience, and would again remind members to consider volunteering there, or to contact them regarding absorbing any of their patients into your practices.

Lieutenant Governor

This past week we met with **Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts** and her Chief Counsel, **Jennifer Wood**, to discuss the next phase of PPACA implementation. We have invited them to address the Council in April, at which point there should be a little more meat on the bones of PPACA, particularly the Health Insurance Exchange piece. She seems sincerely interested in including providers in the process.

We are planning to arrange meetings with **Ed Quinlan of the Hospital Association of Rhode Island**, the **RI Board of Pharmacy**, and to continue our meetings with **BCBSRI, Tufts** and **UHC**.

All in all, this has been an exhilarating experience for me. The leadership team we have with Nitin Damle (who I am convinced is going to be an outstanding President), Newell and Steve, and all of our support staff, an engaged Council and Executive Committee gives me a lot to be thankful for and encourages me that the future looks bright. ❖

Does RIMS have your email address?

Email has become the preferred medium by which RIMS communicates timely information to its members. Please keep Sarah Stevens (sstevens@rimed.org) apprised of your address.

RIMS never gives members' email addresses to third parties. RIMS uses its broadcast email judiciously and exclusively for communications that are timely, important, informative and concise. ❖