



RIMS 198th Annual Member Banquet

Saturday, October 2, 2010

Squantum Association, East Providence

David B. Ettensohn, MD received the Dr. Charles L. Hill Award in recognition of his energetic and eloquent leadership in a time of particular challenge and stress for the Rhode Island medical community.

Caroline Troise, MD was the third recipient of the Dr. Herbert Rakatansky Award for Professionalism in Medicine. Dr. Troise has served as the medical director of the RI Free Clinic since its inception.



RIMS President Vera A. De Palo, MD presents the Dr. Charles L. Hill Award to Dr. Ettensohn

Remarks of David B. Ettensohn, MD

2010 DR. CHARLES L. HILL AWARD RECIPIENT

Thank you, Vera. And Newell, a.k.a. "wordsmith" Warde, for those carefully crafted descriptors that adorn the individualized document that comprises my Charles Hill Award.

This is an award that celebrates "leadership and service" in the medical community. I am honored to be this year's recipient. In my position as Medical Society President a few years ago, physicians in the state of Rhode Island were immediately confronted with the prospect of a reimbursement cut of 7% on an already very low reimbursement scale of 76% of the Medicare fee schedule. If allowed to pass unchallenged, it

would have been the death knell for private practice in the State.

We took up the challenge in the Medical Society and marched on the State House. The amazing thing about this whole experience, in my opinion, was not the concept itself of the march, but the fact that we were able to attract over 700 physicians and other health care workers to participate. In the end, we were successful in stopping the fee reduction, and in fact some fee increases were realized.

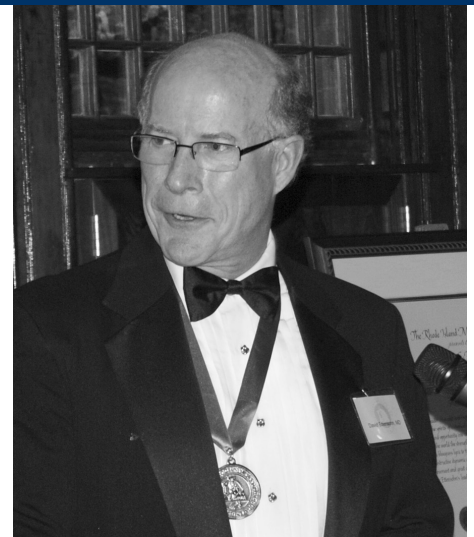
The reason to relate this episode is not to revel in our successes, but to point out the possibilities when physicians get together to fight for what is right. If there is a weakness in American medicine, it is not with the education or training of our doctors, nor with insurance companies or hospital administrators, nor with managed pharmaceutical formularies, nor even with tort reform. It is with the lack of input that doctors have in each of these areas and, in fact, with the whole of the medical profession.

It is not that we cannot impact each and every one of the issues in medicine, but rather, more often than not we sit idly on the sidelines while others make decisions for us. We are spectators rather than participants. Each doctor must be a leader in the effort to assure adequate delivery of medical care to every individual who needs it. That not only means caring

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for the patient who walks through the door, but also caring about every political decision that is before the General Assembly in Rhode Island or in front of Congress on Capitol Hill.

While I have heard a lot of griping about where medicine is heading these days, I have not seen a lot of participation in shaping the decisions



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that we gripe about. Every doctor has the necessary intellect to understand the issues, but few have actually voiced their opinions in a manner that could help bring about change.

We need every doctor to get involved, and we need a strong Medical Society that can collect, process and funnel our concerns in a united voice. I was happy to provide that leadership at a time when it was easy for me to do so. I had a draconian mandate to work with, at a time when doctors' backs were financially against the wall, so it was easy to get folks riled up and focused. The real challenge going forward will be to recognize that there are always important decisions to make on a daily basis and that constant pressure is required of our doctors to assure that every patient gets the best possible care.

The real challenge is to get every doctor to draw on his or her leadership abilities and get involved. If we do not participate where medicine in Rhode Island and, on a bigger stage, the entire country, is going, then it is clear that others will do it for us, and are doing it as we speak. If you like it, then continue to do nothing. If you do not...then LEAD!

Thank you. ❖