

The role of medical associations

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Just 10 years ago in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), 75% of the medical doctors were expatriates. For a number of reasons we had too few local doctors. Today, 75% of the doctors in the FSM are local. We thank all who have been involved in the mission to alleviate shortage of local physicians in our region.

We now have new regional and local medical associations¹. One might ask, what is the purpose of these professional organisations? Recently here in Pohnpei, the new Pohnpei State Medical Association has been working very hard to raise money for this meeting. They were all over the place organising dinners, running raffles, and requesting donations. These people were doing all they could to raise funds so that, through this conference, local and regional physicians will be able to promote professionalism and share medical knowledge among themselves.

You doctors are a valuable resource for our states and our nations. As providers of health care, you have one of the toughest jobs in public service. It is discouraging when your patients do not heed your orders and their health continue to deteriorate or when you know that you could have saved a life only if you had the proper equipment available. These are only a part of the myriad of problems you face on a daily basis. But on a positive note, we are happy that soon 90% of our physicians will be local doctors and we are delighted that you are now back in force².

This meeting will provide you with continuing medical education. It is vital for the continuing well being of our people that you keep current your professional skills in both

* Governor, Pohnpei State, Federated States of Micronesia. Remarks given at the Third Pacific Basin Medical Association Conference, December 12-13, 1996, in Pohnpei sponsored by the Pohnpei State Medical Association.

clinical medicine and community health. As members of national and local medical organisations, you have a lot to accomplish in our region to improve both the health of our people and the strength and dignity of your profession.

I know it is hard to do everything at once, but over time you, as leaders of the health establishment, have to tackle many issues. One is the need to establish local, continuing medical education opportunities. How will you doctors link this continuing education process with relicensing and professional development? Soon you will also need to review our local medical licensure process and research procedures. Currently, a state Director of Health has very little to say about

who can practice medicine in his state. We need your advice on these matters. We also need to look at physician peer review and quality assurance

Our nations and states are facing many difficult problems with the step-down of the Compact funding, we are experiencing diminishing re-

sources which will adversely impact upon our ability to provide essential services for our people. We need strong, competent and caring physicians who will be the role models and leaders of our health care systems and help us face these difficult challenges. Medical associations need to be more than just dinners, raffles, and donations. Our people need your generosity, compassion, and professional skills to guide us into the next century.

In closing, I wish you good luck with your conference. Learn well and then empower us – your patients – by educating us with the knowledge you gain from this and future conferences. Our health depends on it.

References

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