

# President's Message: Don't overlook those Regional Training Programs

At the time of this writing a major announcement is being made in Spokane about what the potential economic impact of the proposed medical school will be on our region. The report indicates that the dollars will be measured in the billions over the next 20 years and the jobs will be measured in the thousands. Trip Umbach, the consulting firm that did the independent financial impact analysis, estimates that the influence on construction, wages, research, business spin offs, new physician practices, and government revenue from taxes will reach about \$2 billion over the next 20 years. Of course the financial effect is not all that will result. The consultant points out that the growth in the healthcare industry due to the medical school will result in improved health care access, improved quality by increasing medical research in our area, more physicians who will want to stay in or return to our area, and better ease of recruiting of physicians due to this being an academic center. In addition, they project that, based on national benchmarks, our medical school alone will account for 46 additional physicians yearly entering practice in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho by 2030. Those predictions are based on a wealth of experience and information that Trip Umbach has compiled over 20 years in the industry and it appears that the assumptions are reasonable.

As comprehensive as this impact analysis is, it would be difficult to include or predict every possible effect that this large project could have on our community. It certainly could create more need for ancillary healthcare workers or professionals and the training programs from which they come. There are a number of healthcare related training programs in our region that could feel a positive impact of a medical school and the increased demand for the graduates they produce. It may be surprising to learn how many of those programs are already in existence in the area. With all the excitement of the potential medical school, we would not want to overlook those very important regional training programs. We have articles this month that highlight some of those programs. From exercise physiology to pharmacy, from physical therapy to communications disorders, from nursing to dentistry, we have a wealth of professional training programs already successfully functioning here in Spokane. We can't lose sight of their

importance as we get fired up about the medical school.

The collaboration on the medical school, which is now more appropriately being called an "Academic Health Sciences Center," has been inspiring to watch. The Medical Society has been intimately involved in the planning committees and legislative visits from the beginning. The business and academic leadership are firmly behind, and actually leading, the project and the momentum is growing. The interest and enthusiasm among doctors is growing also, but we will need more of that. And, our state and federal legislators are very supportive, although the funding for the project remains a big hurdle to be cleared.

You can expect to be hearing more about this monumental task in the very near future. It is just beginning to be discussed broadly in the community. Expect to be asked to participate in some way in making this Academic Health Sciences Center a reality. It is good for healthcare delivery and it is good for our community.



Gary Knox, MD  
SCMS 2010 President

## Spokane County Medical Society



### Circle of Friends



For more information regarding the Circle of Friends program, contact Keith Baldwin, CEO or Michelle Caird, Executive Assistant at (509) 325-5010.