

# It's a New Year, Let's Get Acquainted



By Terri Oskin, MD

Hey y'all. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and some time to relax with family and friends. I'm delighted to be writing my first column as your president.

First, I'll tell you a little about myself: I am an internist, and I've practiced with Northside Internal Medicine—part of Columbia Medical Associates—for 11 years. I grew up in Chicago and finished high school and attended college and medical school at the University of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky. I'm proud of my southern upbringing and I'm pretty informal, so you'll be hearing things straight from me!

As a physician, I'm interested in diabetes management and the importance of advance directives, power of attorney and living wills. We will cover the latter in a future publication, so stay tuned. I also think it's important to improve physician relationships on a more social and one-to-one basis.

2012 promises to be another busy and challenging year. Many of you may recall receiving a survey that asked you to describe your most important issues and concerns as a physician or physician assistant. Some of the top-ranked topics are assuring access to care, expanding Spokane's medical school (WWAMI, UWSOM) curriculum to four years and physician reimbursement/payment reform. Besides those topics, in upcoming newsletters we will explore the controversy in imaging studies affecting radiology and neurology, physician assistant practices and medicine in the military.

January's The Message focuses on Washington State's new law for narcotic prescribing that begins January 2, 2012. The Medical Quality Assurance Commission has set new requirements for who can prescribe chronic pain management and how much, when we need referrals for certain morphine equivalents and resources for phone consultation. The Spokane County Medical Society has diligently built consensus for a community-wide pain agreement that meets the law's primary and essential requirements. Now that the law is real, find out what you need to know, where to go for help and get insights into how it will affect your practice.

If you are practicing good medicine and putting your patient first, the rules shouldn't affect you much. We may all need to make some changes in our practice; however I consider the law a protection for both our patients and us. It protects us from difficult patients by providing clear guidelines on what's acceptable and better defines our roles. I have begun handing out the new opioid agreements to patients, even those who previously signed one. I tell each patient—even my elderly grandmothers—that I'm not singling them out.

Also in 2012, your SCMS will continue to partner with Greater Spokane Incorporated (GSI) to support the new medical school. I hope many of you were able to attend the ground breaking ceremony last fall.

Alongside the Washington State Medical Association, we will continue working with policymakers both locally and in Washington, D.C., to make our voices heard and to express our ongoing concerns about present reimbursement and liability reform. Later this month we will travel to Olympia and we will visit Washington, D.C., in February.

As your president, I also look forward to reuniting us as a group outside of the hospital and office. Because of so many changes in our practice (and busy personal lives), we just don't see or know each other anymore. Last year your SCMS sponsored three social events and we plan to convene more this year. Thanks to the wonderful hosting skills of Drs. Anne Oakley and Deb Harper, we have already enjoyed two successful women physician potlucks. Now we are organizing a retreat for all women physicians to be held later this year.

I look forward to meeting more of you and I encourage you to send me your ideas and opinions. Drop me a note at [TOskin@columbiamedicalassociates.com](mailto:TOskin@columbiamedicalassociates.com) or call me at (509)489-7483.

## New Tool for All Providers: A Uniform Pain Management Agreement

By Mary Noble, MD and Lynda Williamson, DO

One of the best tools for assisting all licensed prescribers in caring for chronic non-cancer pain patients is a tool known as the Pain Management Agreement. This was formerly known as a "Contract," however that language is now antiquated. In March of 2011 the Spokane Prescription Opioid Task Force (SPOTF) formed a sub-committee with members Dr. Lynda Williamson and Dr. Mary Noble. The committee reviewed and compared pain management agreements from many medical practices in Spokane County. A set of elements that are critical to pain management agreements were developed to be compliant with Washington State's new legal requirements. These essential components now form the basis for the Uniform Pain Management Agreement that has been approved by the Spokane Prescription Opioid Task Force and adopted by the Spokane County Medical Society (SCMS) as a community standard. This is a timesaving device that medical practices are welcome and encouraged to adopt for their patients who need chronic analgesia that is in the form of prescribed opioids or other prescribed medications.

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