FALL 2026

THE message

A Newsmagazine of Spokane County Medical Society

River City Youth Grows New Opportunities

Finding My Voice in the House: Reflections from a First-Time Delegate

SCMS MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Deborah Wiser, MD





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SCMS Mission

Serving as the guardian of community health and wellness while leading and promoting the professional practice of medicine.

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President's Message



It's hard to believe that fall is already here. As the days get shorter and our schedules seem to get busier, fall offers a good opportunity to pause and reflect on the past few months. One of the best parts of serving as SCMS President is the opportunity to spend time with our members outside of the day-to-day demands of practice. This season has provided several opportunities to do just that, and each event left me feeling energized and optimistic about the future of medicine in Spokane.

We held another successful SCMS Medicine conference featuring an excellent line up of speakers. While all of the speakers were phenomenal, highlights for me were Dr. Allen's HRT talk and Dr. Mathews' "Tick Talk." Beyond the educational content, it was especially rewarding to reconnect with colleagues, strengthen professional relationships, and enjoy time together outside of our daily clinical responsibilities.

I also had the pleasure of attending the SCMS Shikany Medical Education Celebration Dinner, an event that celebrates excellence in medical education. The evening recognized individuals whose dedication to teaching and mentorship has made a lasting impact on future generations of physicians, and the Shikany Foundation presented Dr. John Klim and Dr. Michael Ryan with the Shikany Teaching Excellence Award. As someone active in postgraduate medical education, it was inspiring to honor those who invest so much of their time, knowledge, and passion in developing the next generation of healthcare leaders.

Finally, it was Spokane's turn to hold the WSMA House of Delegates meeting. While I was unable to attend, I did participate in the resolution review session prior to the meeting and it was truly energizing to see so many passionate physicians and healthcare professionals engaged in thoughtful discussions and advocacy on behalf of our patients and our profession. The commitment demonstrated by delegates from across the state serves as a powerful reminder that physicians continue to play a vital role in shaping the future of healthcare. Hosting this important gathering in Spokane gave us an opportunity to showcase our community while bringing together colleagues dedicated to improving healthcare for all Washingtonians.

These events underscore the many ways our medical community thrives, through advocacy, lifelong learning, mentorship, and fellowship. I am grateful to everyone who contributes their time and talents to these efforts and helps make Spokane County Medical Society a vibrant and engaged organization. Thank you for your continued commitment to our patients, our profession, and one another. ■

Sincerely,



Shannon Dunn, DO, MPH
2026 President, SCMS

Classifieds

MEETINGS

SPOKANE PHYSICIAN FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP
Group support is available for physician family members in Spokane. During times of stress or crisis, whether it involves your spouse, your children or yourself, a listening and confidential ear is often just what physician families need. The group meets in the evening every week. Its members have experience in substance use disorders, behavioral health issues and many other common problems that occur in families. Limited to physician families and their spouses. You are welcome to come to the group as a couple or alone. Contact Carl at (509) 991-3537 or Bill at (509) 710-0636.

Interested in placing a classified ad?

Contact Shelly Bonforti,
SCMS Publications
Email: shelly@spcms.org

Membership Recognition for September-December 2026

Thank you to the members listed below. Their contribution of time and talent has helped to make the Spokane County Medical Society the strong organization it is today.

50 YEARS

Donald Storey, MD
11/01/1976

James C. S. Colquhoun, MD
11/23/1976

40 YEARS

Charles Benage, MD
09/11/1986

Frank Otto, MD
09/11/1986

20 YEARS

Micheal Fallon, MD
09/01/2006

Ronald Ortiz, MD
11/29/2006

10 YEARS

Dawn DeWitt, MD
10/26/2016

Jette Thorslund Benedetto, MD
11/22/2016

Rachel Safran, MD
11/29/2016

Lindsey Dunham, MD
12/06/2016

Jeffrey Clode, MD
12/14/2016

Thomas Mahony, MD
12/14/2016

Michael Barsotti, MD
12/21/2016

Veronica Jessick, MD
12/28/2016



Welcome New Members June-October 2026

PHYSICIANS

- Rahoul Gonsalves, MD
- Caitlin Klamper, MD
- Amanda Oropeza, MD
- Kyle Wyer, DO

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

- Elizabeth Babcock PA-C

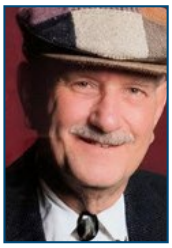


In Memoriam June – September 2025



Joan Groschupf Craig, MD

December 1925 – April 2026



Charles R. Wolfe, MD, MPH

November 1931 – September 2026

SCMS Member Highlight



On the cover: Arches National Park with Mike.

Deborah Wiser, MD

Works at:

CHAS Health, Perry Street location.

Specialty:

Family Medicine, with interests in Lifestyle Medicine and Menopause care.

Why SCMS:

SCMS has been a great place to foster learning and community relationships for me. I became involved in the board several years ago and it was a great way to understand perspectives across specialties, and from a local, non-clinical perspective as well. The crossover of social and educational activities helps bridge us from the silos our medical practices can sometimes be.

Top concern in medicine:

My biggest concern is the infiltration of political agendas into scientific guidance from governmental institutions. It is not just the change from science-based recommendations to opinion on health policy, but also the cultural response that creates diminishing trust in critical sources of information.

Another area of concern is access to care coupled with provider burnout. Access to primary care and specialty care are parallel areas where there are increasing wait times, and sometimes no access at all for publicly insured patients needing specialty care. The issue is compounded by provider burnout with patient volumes and complexity, leading to schedule reductions and early retirements. The administrative pressure for maximizing patient access is understandable, and I have seen this first hand. Yet the solutions in our healthcare system are limited by lack of universal access and heavy insurance-driven administrative burdens for providers and staff.

Why my specialty:

Family medicine and primary care in general have been my interest since my entry into healthcare. Before that, I started my professional career with an engineering degree from the University of Washington and worked as a business analyst for a large consulting firm for several years. Through that consulting work I landed in a Seattle hospital and for the first time had job-envy! My journey to medical school and beyond was about taking the next step and then deciding if it made sense. By the time I took the prerequisites (liked that), worked at a women's health collective in Chicago (perspective-altering), MCAT (didn't love that), interviewed for med school (still with existential doubt about the career path), and set foot into Rush Medical College in Chicago, I knew clinic-based work in Family Medicine would be my path.

The flexibility of family medicine has suited me well. As a field, we tend to have broad interests. I was passionate about primary care and delivering babies, teaching in the Family Medicine Residency, and leadership at CHAS. Having come full circle back to primary care, I have more recently delved into Lifestyle Medicine with recent board certification and Wilderness Medicine, becoming a "Woofer" (Wilderness first responder). The ability to redefine myself with the breadth of primary care appeals to my need for variety and continual learning.

When I'm not at work:

My husband Mike and I are newly empty nesters! Our oldest daughter Olivia just finished RISD (Rhode Island School of Design) and moved to New York City, and our youngest, Allie, is starting her second year at Western Washington University. We are still adjusting and redefining life in the new distance-parenting format.

I love hiking, biking, and traveling adventures. I've recently become more involved with the Spokane Mountaineers, a local outdoors club. This group appeals to me for the variety as well, including hiking, backpacking, biking and paddling.

Last year during my sabbatical, Mike and I completed the RSVP ride from Seattle to Vancouver and Party. This is a 2-day ride, 110 miles on the first day and 85 on the second. It was something I planned to do for almost 20 years after a bike accident on the same ride in 90s. We also had an amazing mountain bike tour of Canyonlands National Park, and I got to do a road trip with Allie to Teton and Yellowstone before she went off to college.

My go-to activity to unwind:

I have a mantra I use on the way home from work that helps decompress from a tougher day. This includes some breathwork around taking on the suffering of patients and letting that go, gratitude for what I learn from them and for what I can offer them, and acceptance of the areas I cannot control, in the clinic and in a broader sense.

Other than that, dinner with my family is an important unwinding ritual for me.

What I read:

I read what my book club tells me to! I mix up fiction and non-fiction, but I do enjoy a good introspective book. The most recent gamechanger for me was Four Thousand Weeks by Oliver Burkeman. It is subtitled Time Management for Mortals, but for me it was more about deciding what's important in life when you can't do it all. Some other non-fiction favorites were Omnivore's Dilemma about the food industry, and Sapiens, a history of Humankind. Both took me ages to get through but were perspective-altering.

My favorite novel last year was "This is Happiness" by Niall Williams. Fabulous historical fiction in rural Ireland in one of the last towns to get electricity. It was great for switching back and forth with reading and audio, narrated with the Irish accent as well. Funny, deep, and I have carried the meaning of the title with me since, delivered somewhere in the middle of the book.



West Coast Ireland with Mom



Muddy Bike Canyonland after NP Rains

What you might not know about me:

I like to sew! I'm not very good at it, but it's a good way to get into the zone and be creative. I read that hobbies are a good place to just enjoy yourself without pressure. So it's ok that things are a little off sometimes on my homemade clothes.

Proud moments in medicine:

I think my proud moments come as the day-to-day expressions of appreciation I hear from my patients. Figuring out something that was a new finding or diagnosis, or just helping with someone understanding their body a bit better. The rest is just a journey, a progression of different career chapters that evolved as I needed them to.

Best advice:

Leave your options open. Ensure you are on a path that gives fulfillment but still allows you to be present with and care for yourself, your family, and your patients. On average, we have four thousand weeks to live. Choose how you spend them with intention.

What's next:

Life has thrown some family health issues into our path, altering my perspective on priorities. I am moving to part time and developing a small side practice applying Lifestyle Medicine and menopause care. LM includes six areas of focus for wellness: physical activity, nutrition, good quality sleep, community, stress management, and avoiding risky behaviors. This next step will allow me to better apply the concepts of LM personally and help others apply it too. ■

SCMS GMM & Mixer



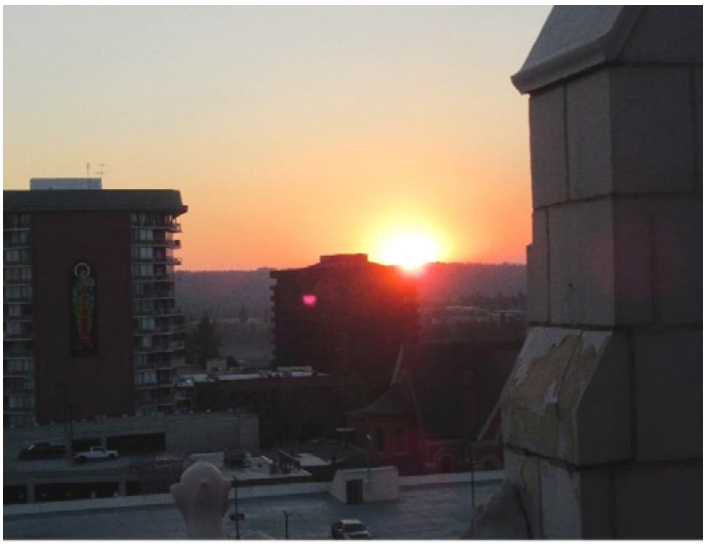






The Spokane County Medical Society hosted its annual GMM & Mixer on August 20, 2026, on the 7th floor terrace of the historic Review Building, erected in 1891 and home of the Spokesman-Review.

Guests were able to meet WSMA leaders and legislators for Q&A, network with peers, and take in the scenic view of the downtown skyline. With close to 70 in attendance, all enjoyed appetizers and drinks, live music by Kat DeJong, as well as great conversation with colleagues in a relaxed atmosphere. A great time was had by all!





A special thanks to our sponsor for the evening!

WSMA Washington State Medical Association
Physician Driven, Patient Focused

River City Youth Grows New Opportunities



2026 was a year of growth for high school youth in River City Youth's agriculture internship programs. After providing 43 paid agricultural internships to high school students in the spring, summer, and fall of 2025, River City Youth expanded to a total of 63 internships for North Spokane high schoolers in 2026. Each internship is a transformative opportunity for a young person to get their first job and connect with their community, nature, and their futures through gardening, beekeeping, cooking, and more.

This fall, the organization is working with 17 youth interns to close out the growing season and contribute to a healthier community in and around Spokane's West Central neighborhood. River City Youth interns are harvesting the last crops from the organization's garden and helping care for Monarch Pathway pollinator garden sites at the Nettleton Triangle and North Monroe Street - gardens that will attract and support monarch butterflies and native pollinators. They are also working with the Spokane Riverkeeper and Riverfront Park to support shoreline restoration projects along the Spokane River.

A highlight of every year at River City Youth is the organization's Harvest Dinner, an annual fundraising dinner that helps to support paid opportunities for youth. River City Youth's youth interns brought canned goods they'd prepared from the garden to this year's dinner, including pickles, pepper jelly, and tomato bruschetta. For the first time, they also brought honey extracted from River City Youth's 2 working beehives to auction to the dinner's attendees. They helped their organization raise more than $40,000, enough to support more than 35 of next year's paid internship opportunities for youth.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SCMS FOUNDATION





As River City Youth's 2026 programs near their dormant period this winter, the organization is planning and preparing for another year of growth in 2027. New Monarch Pathway garden spaces are planned for North Monroe Street, expanding the organization's work into Spokane's Emerson-Garfield neighborhood, and for public parks in the West Central neighborhood. Environmental restoration trainings and community projects will be added to the Spring internship programs, and youth will gain exposure to more career and education pathways through their internships.

This year, River City Youth also launched a Goofballs Gardening Club for adult volunteers to help care for the organization's West Central garden between internship program seasons. The Club will re-launch by May of 2027, helping support the transplanting of hundreds of vegetable crops for youth to nurture in 2027's growing season. You can get involved by signing up to volunteer at www.rcyouth.org.

In 2025, the SCMS Foundation approved a 3-year, $5,000 annual grant to River City Youth Ops as its anchor program in their effort to support a smaller community partner where their contribution could make more of a difference at the intersection of health and community benefit. Their hope is that this support will generate enthusiasm within our medical community for the work SCMS is doing in representing physicians and encourage you to donate to the Foundation.

The Foundation was established in 1996 by the Spokane County Medical Society's Board of Trustees, and continues today to be focused on supporting local programs that serve the health needs of our community. Its mission of "promoting and supporting the development of future physician and physician assistant leaders within our community, and identifying and funding important and innovative projects that advance the health of our community" is driven and preserved by the physician and physician assistant members of the Spokane County Medical Society.

Designated as a charitable organization, your contributions to your Spokane County Medical Society Foundation keep the foundation healthy as we work to keep the community healthy. Please make a charitable donation today to continue the valuable work of the Foundation. You may make your check payable to the SCMS Foundation and mail it to PO Box 650, Veradale, WA 99037.

Spokane County Medical Society Foundation

PFAS Exposure: What Clinicians Need to Know



By: Francisco R. Velázquez, MD, SM, FCAP – Health Officer, Spokane Regional Health District

Barbara Morrissey, MS Toxicologist, Washington State Department of Health



Spokane County is home to the largest known area of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) groundwater contamination in Washington. In 2017, the City of Airway Heights discovered PFAS contamination in their municipal drinking water wells. Since then, hundreds of private wells in the West Plains have tested above PFAS drinking water standards.

Although Airway Heights now provides safe drinking water and many affected private wells use filtration systems that remove PFAS, these chemicals can remain in the human body for years after exposure ends. Blood serum testing conducted more than two years after clean water was introduced to Airway Heights found residents still had average PFAS concentrations well above national levels, including perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS).

As a result, thousands of Spokane county residents may have questions for their healthcare providers about PFAS testing, health risks, and recommended follow-up care.

WHAT ARE PFAS?

PFAS are a large class of synthetic chemicals that have been used worldwide since the 1950s. The Interstate Technology & Regulatory Council explains that PFAS' strong carbon-fluorine bonds make them highly stabile, resistant to heat, and effective at repelling water, oil, and stains. These characteristics have led to widespread use in nonstick cookware, stain-resistant textiles, food packaging, and firefighting foam. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, medical uses of PFAS include protective coatings on surgical drapes and gowns and fluoropolymers like Teflon® in surgical tools and implants.

Because PFAS resist environmental degradation, they persist in water, soil, wildlife, and humans for decades. Some compounds, including PFOS, can accumulate in fish, animals, and people over time.

While dietary sources and consumer products contribute to background exposure, the highest exposures are generally associated with occupational settings and long-term consumption of contaminated drinking water or food produced using contaminated water, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

HEALTH EFFECTS

PFAS are efficiently absorbed and distributed throughout the body. Some compounds accumulate in the liver, kidney, blood, and other tissues. Their persistence is partly due to biological processes that limit elimination through urine and feces.

Health concerns have increased because PFAS can cross the placenta and be transferred through breast milk, potentially exposing children during critical stages of development. Reviews by ATSDR and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) conclude that the strongest evidence links PFAS exposure with:

- Reduced birth weight
- Reproductive and developmental effects
- Altered immune function
- Dyslipidemia
- Increased risk of certain cancers

While research continues to evolve, these findings provide the foundation for current clinical guidance.

CLINICAL ASSESSMENT AND TESTING

Patients increasingly ask healthcare providers about PFAS testing and ways to reduce potential health risks. Several resources are available to support clinical decision-making.

ATSDR guidance emphasizes reducing ongoing exposure while maintaining routine preventive care and health monitoring. NASEM guidance suggests additional health screening in patients with high serum levels.

NASEM recommends that clinicians use shared decision-making when discussing PFAS blood testing. Serum testing typically measures 7-12 PFAS compounds and can help establish whether significant exposure occurred, particularly in individuals with a history of contaminated drinking water or occupational exposure. Repeat testing may also help assess whether exposure-reduction efforts have been effective. ATSDE has developed a serum estimation lool that can estimate PFAS exposure from contaminated drinking water and may serve as an alternative to blood testing.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

However, PFAS blood tests have important limitations. They are not diagnostic tests and cannot determine whether a current or future health condition was caused by PFAS exposure. Clinicians should use established interpretation guidance when reviewing results and incorporate findings into a broader assessment of the patient's health history and risk factors.

Clinical management should remain individualized. Depending on patient-specific factors, providers may consider reviewing metabolic, liver, renal, and thyroid function as part of routine preventive care and risk assessment.

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has a webpage to support clinicians in accessing and acting on available clinical guidance.

EXPOSURE REDUCTION REMAINS THE PRIMARY INTERVENTION

1. Patients who live in areas with PFAS water contamination can test their well water with an accredited lab. If detected, they can install a water filter certified by a third party, like the National Science Foundation, to remove PFAS.
2. Regular consumption of meat, eggs and milk from animals fed by contaminated water may also lead to significant human exposure. Consider switching animals to filtered water.
3. Assess occupational exposure and ways to minimize exposure.
4. Since 2018, the state has restricted PFAS in many consumer products sold in Washington. However, older products may still be in the cupboard. Take care using older products that advertise stain or water resistance for leather and clothing, rug protection products, old car wash products, and old floor polish and waxes. Select PFAS-free items when replacing products around the home.
5. Supporting fact sheets and information for patients are available from DOH.

Although PFAS contamination presents ongoing public health challenges in Spokane County, clinicians can play a critical role by helping patients understand their exposure, reduce ongoing risks, interpret available testing, and maintain appropriate preventive healthcare. As evidence continues to evolve, exposure reduction and individualized clinical care remain the cornerstones of management. ■



Shikany Endowment
Providence Inland Northwest Foundation

SCMS Shikany Medical Education Celebration Dinner

The Spokane County Medical Society (SCMS) and the Shikany Endowment co-hosted its third Medical Education Celebration Dinner on September 24, 2026, at The Spokane Club, honoring the legacy of Dr. Sam Shikany and the educators who carry it forward.

The past decade has seen tremendous growth in medicine and medical education in our community. From undergraduate medical education to graduate medical education to advance practice programs, this growth would not have been possible without the incredible support from so many dedicated professionals.

During this time, the Shikany Endowment has sought to recognize excellence and dedication through their awards program. Annual awards are presented to students who have demonstrated leadership and community engagement early in their careers. Also honored are extraordinary faculty teachers who devote their expertise, energy, and time to making the Spokane area an amazing place to learn medicine and grow professionally.

Shikany Teaching Excellence Awards were presented to Dr. John Klim Dr. Michael Ryan during the evening festivities and Dr. Judy Benson delivered an inspiring keynote address.

A special highlight of the evening, Dr. Rocky Kerr spent the summer painting a portrait of Dr. Sam Shikany, which he completed and framed for the occasion. Using a couple very old photos, Dr. Kerr painted the portrait to recognize Dr. Shikany and honor the enduring impact of his life. The painting will be displayed at the Providence Community Clinic.

The Shikany Endowment represents an enduring Legacy to Sam Shikany. Dr. Shikany was a practicing physician with a heart for service to the homeless and to promote medical education in and around Spokane. He was instrumental in establishing the clinic at the House of Charity Shelter (now the Providence Community Clinic) celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its founding this year, and through the Shikany Endowment supporting yearly continuing medical education conferences and recognition awards to individuals for their contributions to Medical Education. As such, the Endowment represents his gift back to the Spokane Community. ■











Medicine 2026













The SCMS held their annual all-day CME conference, Medicine 2026, on Friday, September 25, 2026, at The Historic Davenport Hotel. Attendees joined the meeting to hear from an array of local and regional experts, earning up to 6.5 hours of Category 1 CME credit.

Dr. Savannah Marie Patterson and Dr. Radica Alicic started the morning off, presenting “ADHD Medications: Who Needs It, Why, and How/When to Deprescribe” and “An Internist’s View on the Cardio-Kidney-Metabolic Framework” respectively. The morning session concluded with Dr. Caitlin Allen who lectured on “Hormones Are Our Friends and Osteoporosis Update for the PCP.”

The afternoon session kicked off with “Opioid Use Disorder: Diagnosis and Treatment” by Dr. Lauren Whiteside, followed by “Tick-Borne Diseases in the Pacific Northwest” from Dr. Samantha Mathews-Klebes and Dr. Amish J. Dave presenting “2026 Updates in Rheumatology for the Internist.”

The conference concluded with “The Good, the Bad, and the LDL: Updated Guidelines from the ACC for the PCP” by Dr. Ileisa IA Oleson, Internal Medicine Resident (PGY-3).

The SCMS thanks all the event supporters for helping make the program a success!

Thank you for supporting grants!

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Shikany Endowment
Providence Inland Northwest Foundation

Spokane County Medical Society Foundation

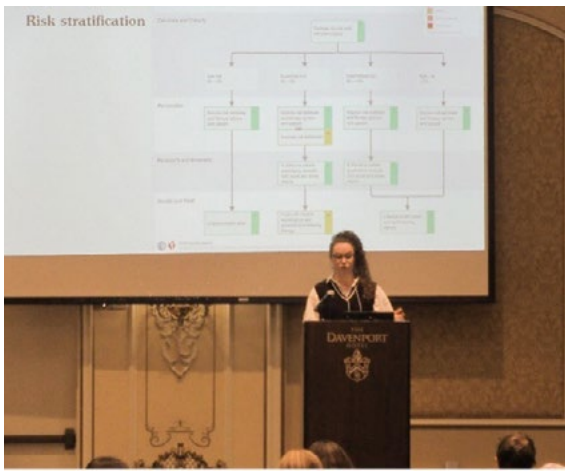
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HOSPICE OF SPOKANE

Providence







SCMS Recruiting Job Fair

The SCMS Medical Education Committee (MEC) hosted a recruitment job fair in collaboration with the Family Medicine Residency Spokane fall All GME Professional Development Afternoon on October 15, 2026, during the lunch hour.

Dr. Michelle Drobny, Program Director with Family Medicine Residency Spokane, welcomed all in attendance and launched the career fair. The MEC works toward one main goal: supporting training and retaining physicians in Spokane.

We're grateful to the partners who joined us, investing in our residents and future physicians: Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Coulee Medical Center, Kittitas Valley Healthcare, Providence Inland Northwest Washington, and Sound Physicians.











Finding My Voice in the House: Reflections from a First-Time Delegate



By: Amanda Oropeza, MD

I teach my medical students at the University of Washington School of Medicine, Spokane, that advocacy works best when it fits who we are: our values and our personalities. For years I've practiced that, one patient and one clinic at a time. As an HIV specialist and a queer physician, I've pushed in every workplace I've been part of for HIV treatment and gender-affirming care to be delivered in primary care, where patients already are.

What I've found harder is advocacy beyond the exam room. Arguably, policy work shapes the communities I serve more than anything I can do in a single clinic. Working in traditional medical settings, though, I rarely had the time or energy to show up for it. That changed this year. In October I opened my own direct primary care practice in Spokane (Oropeza Health - oropezahealth.com), and I'm grateful to the DPC community for encouraging me along the way. The flexibility of this model is what finally made room for this kind of work.

So this fall I attended my first WSMA House of Delegates meeting, with the privilege of serving as a delegate for the Spokane County Medical Society. Like everything else this year as a new physician entrepreneur, it meant learning, observing, and doing all at once. I came expecting to learn how the meeting runs: how resolutions are written, debated, and voted on, and what happens to them afterward. Mostly I listened, weighing each resolution and whether I'd vote differently from my delegation.

On a few issues, though, I felt strongly enough to speak. Gender-affirming care for youth was one. Hearing a single dissenting opinion was enough to bring me to the microphone. I hadn't planned what I would say, and my voice shook. I'm still glad I stood up.

I care for these young people and their parents in exam rooms. I've cared for them in both Washington and Alaska. In both places, for somewhat different reasons, their access is shrinking, and they are frightened. They're frightened to be who they are and afraid to speak up for themselves. Some have wonderfully supportive families, and some families with the means to do so have left the country. Others have very little support at school, in their communities, or at home. Those are the kids I worry about most, though I worry about all of them. When they aren't in the clinic room, it's my responsibility to speak for them, and I'm grateful for the work WSMA is doing to protect them.

The meeting also connected to my teaching. I help implement curriculum on artificial intelligence at the medical school. Every institution of higher education is struggling to both monitor and embrace AI, and clinicians are grappling with it in practice, too. I appreciated the keynote speaker's insights on AI in health care around the world, and I left with questions. Why would we hand a task like prescription refills to autonomous AI rather than a simpler, more predictable program, especially when AI agents have been shown to act beyond the boundaries set for them? I'm not a software engineer, and that's exactly my point. Physicians need direct lines to the people building these systems so we understand the nuances, trade-offs, and reasoning behind their design. These are clinical decisions, and physicians belong in the driver's seat.

I tell my students to advocate in ways that are true to who they are. This year I got to practice what I teach, shaky voice and all. I'm excited to stay involved with WSMA and SCMS and help shape policy that affects us and our patients, no matter who we serve. ■

Spokane Internal Medicine Physician Inaugurated as 2026-2027 President of Washington State Medical Association

Spokane internal medicine physician Matt Hollon, MD, MPH, MACP, was inaugurated as president of the Washington State Medical Association at its annual House of Delegates meeting on Saturday, Sept. 26, at The Historic Davenport in Spokane. The WSMA represents more than 14,000 physicians, resident physicians, physician assistants, and medical students throughout Washington state.

Dr. Hollon earned his medical degree from the University of Washington School of Medicine and completed his residency, a general internal medicine fellowship, and a master's degree in public health at the University of Washington. He has practiced primary care internal medicine for more than 30 years and for the last 20 years in Spokane.

He is the program director of a new internal medicine residency program in Spokane for MultiCare Health System, where he also sees patients. The program will welcome its first class of residents in June 2027. In addition to his clinical practice, Dr. Hollon serves as a clinical professor at the University of Washington School of Medicine and at Washington State University's Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine.

Dr. Hollon is a past president (2015) of the Spokane County Medical Society and past governor (2019-2022) of the Washington Chapter of the American College of Physicians. ACP named him a Master of the College and he currently serves on its Board of Regents. He has served on the WSMA board of trustees since 2015 and on the executive committee since 2023. Dr. Hollon was instrumental in proposing and launching the WSMA Medical Student and Resident Advocacy Program, which enrolled 70 students and residents in its first year in 2025. The program was recognized by the American Association of Medical Society Executives with a 2026 Profiles of Excellence Award in the advocacy category.

He has earned multiple awards for teaching and service, including the Richard M. Tucker Excellence in Teaching Award from the UWSOM in 2011 and 2015; the Advocacy and Community Service Award from the Society of General Internal Medicine, Northwest Region in 2021; the CREATE Award for Climate Change Advocacy from Gonzaga University Environmental Organization; and both the Exemplary Leadership Award in 2021 and the Laureate Award in 2022 from the Washington Chapter of ACP.



Photo courtesy of Lisa Venticinque Photography.

The following physicians were also elected as officers at the WSMA Annual Meeting: Bindu Nayak, MD, Wenatchee endocrinologist, president-elect; John Scott, MD, Seattle infectious disease physician, vice president; and Colin Fields, MD, Seattle family medicine physician, secretary-treasurer. The fifth officer of WSMA's executive committee is Immediate Past President Bridget Bush, MD, FASA, Everett anesthesiologist, who will serve as committee chair.

In addition to several WSMA members who were reelected to the board of trustees, newly elected trustees were John Howington, MD, Silverdale surgeon; Tanya Keeble, MD, Spokane psychiatrist; Dave Cundiff, MD, Ilwaco addiction medicine physician; and Garrett Jeffery, DO, Bellingham family physician. José Flores-Rodarte, MD, SeaTac family physician, will serve as chair of the WSMA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committee. Peter Barkett, MD, Silverdale internal medicine physician, and Tony Quang, MD, JD, Seattle radiation oncologist, were elected to an AMA alternate delegate positions, and Blake Kruger, MD, Silverdale family physician, Gabriella Girolami, MD, Seattle resident physician, and Madelyn Hartrim-Lowe, a Spokane medical student, were elected to serve as young physician, resident, and student trustees, respectively, each for a one-year term. ■

Washington State Medical Association Honors Spokane Physician with 2026 Grassroots Advocate Award

Claire Brutocao, MD, a psychiatrist at Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane and associate program director of the Providence Psychiatry Residency Spokane, has been recognized by the Washington State Medical Association (WSMA) with a 2026 Grassroots Advocate Award for her leadership in physician advocacy on behalf of patients and the medical profession.

The award was presented as part of the 2026 WSMA Apple Awards program during the WSMA House of Delegates Annual Meeting held Sept. 26 at The Historic Davenport in Spokane. The Grassroots Advocate Award recognizes physicians for their advocacy efforts supporting WSMA's legislative priorities.

Dr. Brutocao was recognized for her leadership as co-chair of the Washington State Psychiatric Association's Government Relations Committee, including her work advocating for patient safety and responsible prescribing policies. She was also honored for mentoring resident physicians and encouraging engagement in advocacy efforts at both the state and federal levels.

"These individuals and organizations have distinguished themselves by extraordinary displays of passion, engagement, and commitment that are the hallmarks of good medicine and public service," said Bridget Bush, MD, FASA, WSMA's outgoing 2025-2026 president, who presented the awards during the association's meeting. "We are grateful for the gifts of their time, their leadership, and their dedication to the health and welfare of Washingtonians."

For more information about WSMA and its physician advocacy efforts, visit the WSMA website at wsma.org.



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Why SCMS?

"I believe that more than ever, a united physician voice is the most effective method for amplifying and advocating for the needs of our communities and patients."

— *Rebecca Mallo, MD - Chief Medical Officer, Providence Medical Group and 2026 SCMS President-Elect*

"It is important to have a strong medical community to support each other professionally and personally and SCMS is helping build relationships between those in the medical field. This is helpful to the individuals but also helps build a robust culture of medical practice and continuing education – which is valuable to the Spokane community."

— *Michelle Drobny, DO - Program Director Spokane Teaching Health Clinic, Family Medicine Residency, and 2026 SCMS Secretary-Treasurer*

"As a physician in Pend Oreille County, our only Medical Society is the SCMS. As a practicing physician there I have appreciated the advocacy and community that the SCMS provides. As a Clinical Dean for the UWSOM, I appreciate the strong advocacy for medical education in Spokane and a creative, collaborative space to develop medical education in our region – both Spokane and in rural areas."

— *Geoff Jones, MD - Newport Hospital and Health Services; University of Washington School of Medicine - Clinical Dean; Coulee Medical Center and SCMS Medical Education Committee Chair*

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