

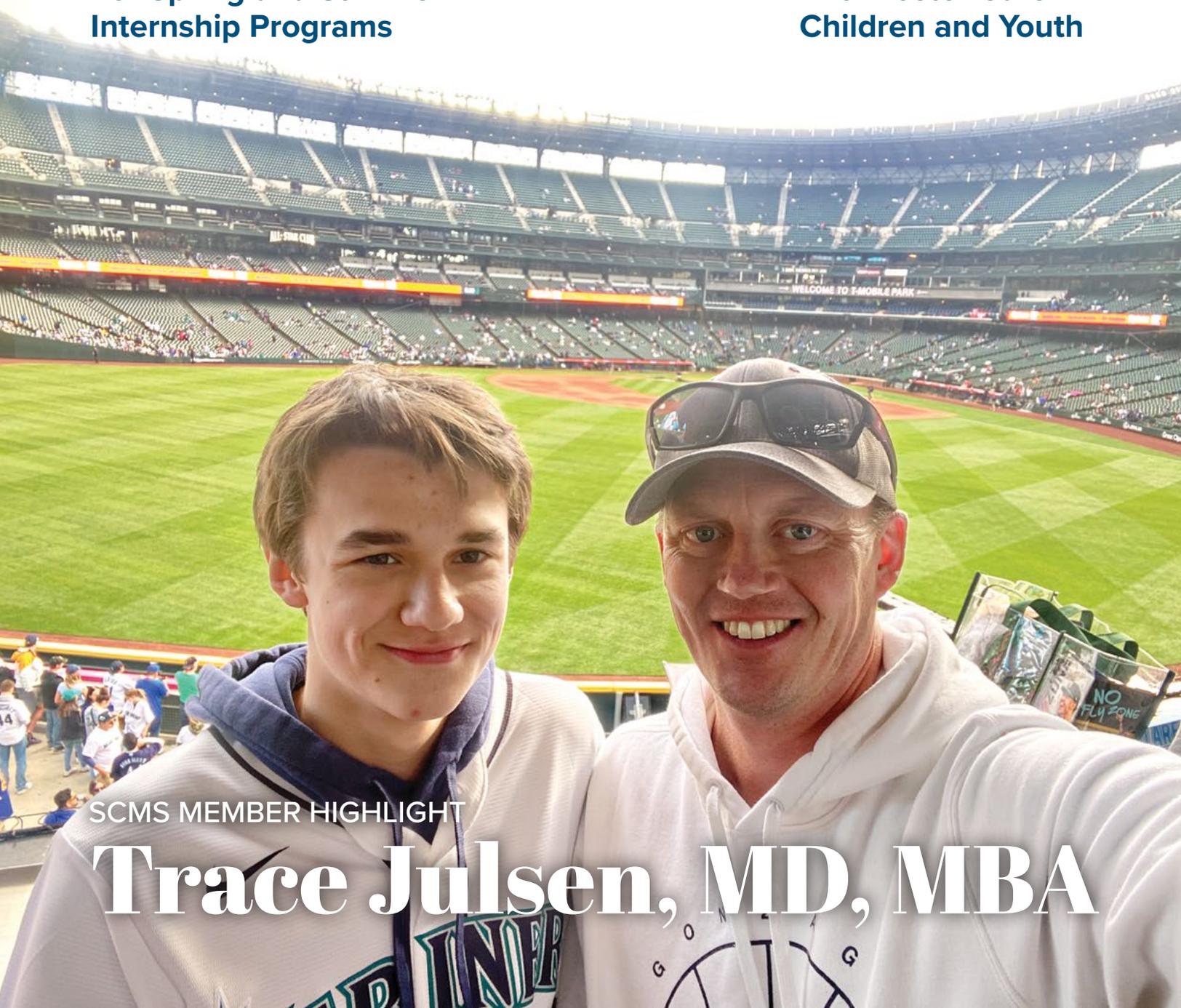
message



A Newsmagazine of Spokane County Medical Society

**River City Youth Prepares
For Spring and Summer
Internship Programs**

**The Potential Impact
of Foster Care in
Children and Youth**



SCMS MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Trace Julsen, MD, MBA



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SCMS Mission

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

Mark Your Calendar Today for 2026!

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AUGUST 20, 2026

SCMS GMM & Mixer

SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

SCMS Medicine 2026 CME Conference

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President's Message



Happy New Year from the Spokane County Medical Society (SCMS) leadership team! As we begin 2026, we celebrate the strength of our medical community and reaffirm our commitment to advancing patient care, supporting graduate medical education, and shaping the future of healthcare in Spokane. Healthcare continues to evolve rapidly, and with these changes come challenges that

impact our patients, our practices, and the physician-patient relationship we hold sacred. These realities demand a unified voice and proactive engagement from all of us.

A warm thank you to my predecessor, Dr. Ahmad, for paving the way and providing exemplary leadership. I moved to Spokane for residency in the height of the pandemic and despite the turmoil of residency and COVID, this city rooted itself deeply in my heart and intend to be here for a long time. I joined SCMS as a fresh attending physician and am now honored to serve as the President for the next year. I have big shoes to fill, but I am dedicated to continuing advocacy for our community, our profession and calling, and the next generation of physicians and physician assistants.

We invite you to join us shaping policies that protect physician-led, team-based care and ensure access to quality healthcare for every patient. Your participation matters—whether through contributing ideas for policy resolutions, engaging in WSMA House of Delegates which will be held in Spokane this year, volunteering on SCMS committees, or participating in our upcoming Women in Medicine and Medicine CME conferences. Together, we can strengthen graduate medical education, provide mentorship, and create opportunities for lifelong learning through community and networking.

We encourage you to renew your membership, invite colleagues to join, and share your feedback to help us refine our priorities. Your voice is essential to advancing advocacy, education, and excellence in Spokane's medical community. Thank you for your dedication and leadership—let's make 2026 impactful for our patients, our profession, and our future. ■

Shannon Dunn, DO
2026 President, SCMS

CLASSIFIEDS

MEETINGS/ CONFERENCES/EVENTS

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.

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Membership Recognition for January - February 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.

60 YEARS

William Brown, MD
02/22/1966

A. Eugene Grossmann, MD
02/17/1976

David Cohen, MD
02/17/1976

Michael Hinnen, MD
02/17/1976

40 YEARS

Christel Carlson, MD
01/16/1986

10 YEARS

Kimdung Nguyen, MD
01/08/2016

Eugene Patterson, MD
01/28/2016

Rogelio Cantu, PA-C
01/28/2016

Jaime Basnillo, MD
02/23/2016

50 YEARS

Robert Weigand, MD
01/01/1976

New Members: January 2026

PHYSICIANS

- Benjamin Arthurs, MD
- Cecil Brown, MD

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

- Randy Robbins, PA-C

Meet your 2026 SCMS Board of Trustees!

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Shannon Dunn, DO



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Francisco Velázquez, MD, SM, FCAP



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Works at:

Providence Medical Group

Specialty:

Family Practice

Why SCMS:

Over the past five years, I have become increasingly engaged in advocacy within medicine. Through that

experience, I have come to appreciate how much more impactful our voices are when we speak collectively rather than individually. Organized medicine provides the structure and credibility necessary to influence meaningful change.

Spokane County Medical Society plays a critical role in giving regional healthcare providers a unified platform to discuss the challenges we face in delivering high-quality care to our community. From reimbursement pressures and regulatory burdens to workforce shortages and evolving care models, these issues are complex and require coordinated leadership.

As one of the largest regional medical organizations in Washington State, the Spokane County Medical Society is uniquely positioned to ensure that our community’s physicians and advanced practice providers are well

represented in state-level decisions that directly affect our ability to practice medicine. Those decisions impact all of us—whether in small private practices, independent clinics, or larger health systems.

I am drawn to the Spokane County Medical Society because of its long-standing commitment to bringing the medical community together. It has been instrumental in fostering collaboration, advancing advocacy efforts, and maintaining a strong, unified voice for healthcare in our region. I am honored to contribute to that mission and help strengthen our collective impact moving forward.

Top concern in medicine:

This is a challenging question in today’s healthcare environment because the pressures facing medicine are multifaceted and rapidly evolving.

First, financial sustainability remains a central concern. Increasing insurance pressures, declining reimbursement, prior authorization burdens, and expanding state and federal regulatory requirements are placing significant strain on practices of all sizes. These challenges threaten the viability of independent practices and contribute to consolidation, which ultimately affects patient access and continuity of care.

Second, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to evidence-based medicine and preventive care. As healthcare systems face financial and operational pressures,



it is essential that clinical decisions continue to be guided by science, best practices, and long-term community health outcomes. Preventive care, chronic disease management, and public health initiatives are foundational to improving both quality of care and overall cost sustainability.

Finally, workforce sustainability is an urgent priority. Provider burnout, administrative overload, and shifting practice models are affecting engagement across the profession. At the same time, we must invest in the next generation of physicians and advanced practice providers by strengthening partnerships with local medical schools and training programs. Supporting mentorship, clinical training opportunities, and early professional development will be critical to ensuring that our region continues to attract and retain talented clinicians.

Why my specialty:

I chose Family Medicine because I genuinely love the continuity and relationships that come with caring for patients across their entire lives. There's something incredibly meaningful about walking alongside someone from birth through adulthood and even into end-of-life care. I value getting to know whole families—sometimes multiple generations—and understanding the broader context of their health, not just isolated medical issues. I also appreciate the role we play in helping patients navigate what can be a very complex healthcare system. Being a steady presence, an advocate, and a trusted guide for my patients is what makes this work deeply fulfilling for me.

When I'm not at work:

I love the outdoors and grew up as an avid skier. Lately, I have spent most of time hanging out with my three teenage kids and attending their never-ending events. When I have a free afternoon, I try to get outside in to get in a round of golf whenever possible.

My go-to activity to unwind:

Probably a round of golf if possible.

What I read:

Recently, lots of healthcare finance and leadership books. I do enjoy suspense novel when I have time.

What you might not know about me:

We live on 20 acres and have a total of 17 pets: 6 dogs, 8 horses, 2 rabbits and a mini pig. Also on the farm is a resident porcupine, family of rabbits and the transient moose and deer.

Proud moments in medicine:

Recognition by my peers for a leadership award a couple of years ago.

Best advice:

Find a good mentor. I had the privilege of joining a great group of physicians at the start of my career who all provided me with a strong mentorship base. Some of them pushed me a little more than I was comfortable with and challenged me to step up in leadership roles. I still communicate with many of them gathering their advice and input on challenging work-related issues and personal concerns.

What's next:

Continue working on improving our healthcare system. I have begun working hard with WSMA in advocacy roles to support physicians' long-term sustainability. I enjoy leadership roles and will continue to look to build strong teams that are committed to providing high quality of care to our community. ■

River City Youth Prepares For Spring And Summer Internship Programs



After an incredible summer, River City Youth welcomed 15 high school youth to our paid Fall Agriculture Internship program! From September to November, these inspiring young people spent six hours a week completing the work of harvesting and maintaining our West Central garden for 2025. In addition to harvesting greens, tomatoes, squash, and turnips to help feed our community, our Fall youth interns gained experience with landscaping, composting, beekeeping, and pickling. The youth even participated in our annual Harvest Dinner fundraiser, making speeches to more than 60 adults about their experience in the program!

The end of our growing season in Spokane was a bittersweet moment for our team as we bid these youth a seasonal “farewell for now.” As we prepare for spring and summer programming, we’re inspired by their reflections on our time together. Kasper, a youth intern who participated in all three of our 2025 program seasons, shared with us at the end of the season:

“When we started, I barely knew who the people in the internship were and was just getting through the day. But as it went on, silly things happened, and we’ve done a lot and accomplished a lot in the garden. It taught me that life can be beautiful. It just takes time, effort, and consistency. The weeds aren’t going to stop coming back, so you have to keep taking care of the garden so it stays beautiful. If you take care of the garden, it will take care of you.”

This Spring, River City Youth will hold two seven week seasons of internship programming for a total of 20

high school youth. In addition to preparing and planting crops for this new year, youth interns will work to create a Monarch Pathway of milkweed and pollinator plants across the West Central neighborhood - a project that will help educate our community on the importance of our native plants. In our Summer program, we’re adding 5 additional internship opportunities for youth to follow up on this work and gain valuable skills in communication, collaboration, and relationship building. We’re excited to grow this program and connect more youth with an inclusive and joyful community! ■



For details on the SCMS Foundation, Board Role & Application, and Grant Application, please visit www.spcms.org/spokane-county-medical-society-foundation

2026 Medical-Dental Health & Wellness Business Symposium



Erin Rose Medina, MD
SCMS Past President 2023

I had the pleasure of attending the 2026 Medical-Dental Health & Wellness Business Symposium on January 23rd, a collaborative event presented by the Spokane County Medical Society, the Spokane District Dental Society, and

Gonzaga University. What a unique opportunity to get to meet with our dental colleagues. It was an enlightening, entertaining, and educational event! Topics included a talk on the future of artificial intelligence in medicine and dentistry, how to avoid burnout, and healthcare leadership, as well as a panel discussion and social.

We had a great discussion led by John Correia, PhD, on opportunities and pitfalls of this technology. It is here and will continue to increase in its influence on our profession, whether we're ready for it or not!

Our own Julie Kaczmark, MD, had some great suggestions for avoiding burnout after sharing her own journey through burnout and healing. Dr. Kaczmark is also a yoga instructor and avid hiker and invited participants to contact her to attend one of her classes or go on a hike. I took her up on the latter and had a great walk around Manito Park (after finding the hiking trail we initially chose to be too muddy). Connecting with colleagues and getting fresh air and exercise is a great way to stave off burnout!

Finally, Rachel Strawther, EdD, gave insights on healthcare leadership. It is important to remember that, as physicians and physician assistants, we are all in a position of leadership, whether in a clinical or administrative position. Let us all strive to take our places at the table, so we don't find ourselves on the menu! ■



The Potential Impact of Foster Care in Children and Youth

**Francisco R. Velázquez, M.D., S.M., FCAP –
Health Officer, Spokane Regional Health District**

**Dr. Terri Crafts – Chief Executive Officer,
Embrace Washington**

Foster care is a temporary, court-monitored service provided by states to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and youth. Despite the many positive benefits of foster care, these children often face health challenges, both mentally and physically.

There are two main ways that children enter the foster care system. The most common process is through confidential reports of suspected maltreatment to a state or county hotline, either from individuals in the community who are mandated to report suspected maltreatment (e.g., physicians, police officers, teachers) or from other concerned citizens. The second, less common, way that children can enter the foster care system is through voluntary relinquishment by parents who feel they can no longer care for their children.

Foster care is meant to be a temporary arrangement where trained caregivers provide for the care of a child when their biological parent(s) are unable to care for them. The foster care system is complex, composed of a combination of federal, state and local organizations working to keep children safe and help them thrive in a home and school environment.

Over 77% of all foster children are placed with relatives or non-relative caregivers, while the remainder are placed in group homes, institutions, or supervised independent living. In Washington’s Department of Child Youth and Family’s Region 1, which includes Eastern Washington, approximately 54% of foster care placements are kinship placements.

In the United States, children ages 0 up to young adults ages 21 are represented in the foster care system, with the median age of entry just 6.1. According to the last report (2024) from The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, 328,947 U.S. children were in the system in 2024.



Children commonly enter foster care following traumatic and/or violent events such as neglect (64%), parental substance use (35%), physical abuse (13%), and caregiver illness (13%), according to data published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2021). Many continue to face additional stress within the foster care system itself, including separation from family, court involvement, frequent placement changes, and, at times, further harm.

Before entering care, children are frequently exposed to multiple risk factors— such as poverty, family instability, prenatal substance exposure, and other traumatic life events— that can affect their long-term health. As a result, children and youth in foster care experience higher rates of chronic health conditions and poorer overall health than their peers.

Mental health concerns are especially common. Research studies have demonstrated that children in foster care are several times more likely than other children to experience conditions such as ADHD, depression, anxiety, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, reactive attachment disorder, and behavioral problems. It’s also common for foster care children to engage in high-risk behaviors such as violence, substance use, and delinquency.

These challenges often continue into adulthood, increasing the risk of involvement with the justice system and other poor outcomes. For example, among foster children in the U.S. who began participating in the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being during adolescence, 17% had been arrested during the previous 12-months, with arrest rates more than four times the national rate for 18- to 24-year-olds.

Despite the widely documented needs, many children and youth in foster care do not receive timely or coordinated mental health services, particularly among ethnic minorities. Barriers include fragmented health and social service systems, limited care coordination, and the complexity of navigating foster care and welfare systems.

Despite all these significant concerns, children and youth in or transitioning from foster care can have a bright future. Providers can play a key role in that potential success. Washington state and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) have specific guidance and resources for providers. AAP recommends an initial health assessment within 72 hours of placement, followed by a more comprehensive evaluation within 30 days.

Beyond medical care, providers can play a key role in advocating for trauma-informed approaches to foster care, as well as provide support for foster parents and caregivers by offering guidance on attachment, behavioral health management, and the importance of stability. Often the provider is the key contact and resource for foster children and caregivers alike.

The following is a quote from City of One A Memoir by Dr. Francine Cournois, who grew up in foster care with her sister. She describes her experience with her own pediatrician, “He listened carefully and respectfully to everything I told him. He even seemed to believe me when



I said I'd become a doctor someday. I was convinced he took me more seriously than I took myself.” As doctors with decades of experience, this resonated. We listen, act, and very importantly, we care. ■

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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*



Membership Has Meaning and Value

We urge you to continue to invest in membership at the SCMS. Your expertise, passion and local engagement are vital to our profession's growth and success.

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