Longtime members, officers and supporters laud medical society’s many contributions

‘Culture and commitment of MSMP will never be replaced’

By Cliff Collins
For The Scribe

The history of the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland is people.

Innumerable physicians have devoted their time and money to the organization over its long history because they believed in supporting their fellow doctors and improving care for their patients.

Moreover, MSMP has retained a solid core of hundreds of physicians who have remained loyal members for decades, some as far back as 1958.

For many years, MSMP employed the slogan “Physicians creating the best environment in which to care for patients” to describe the way it pictured its place in the community. The organization viewed its role as both benefiting members and serving the public.

Trustees such as John Evans, MD, an anesthesiologist who has served on the MSMP board for 17 years, including as 2008–09 president, say that combination is what drew them and kept them involved in the Society. Evans said MSMP has been unique among health care-related organizations in its community service – such as its Physician Wellness Program, its launching of Project Access NOW to help the uninsured through providers donating care, and the Medical Society’s years of participating in disaster planning – actions that are not moneymaking ventures but benefit both the medical and larger community.

“That’s something nobody else does,” he said. “I really appreciate MSMP’s willingness to do that. I just loved our interest in all those endeavors.” The Society backed efforts such as Project Access NOW not because of any “pecuniary interests” involved, but to give care to those in need and to help raise public awareness and educate clinicians and medical students about the importance of providing care to all members of the community, said Evans, who has devoted many hours representing MSMP on the Northwest Oregon Health Preparedness Organization.

‘A faithful partner’

When MSMP signs off for the last time at the end of this year, it will leave a void that Evans and many other physicians and supporters fear will remain.

“I am just so sad to see the Medical Society close after 136 years,” said Dick Clark, chief executive of The Portland Clinic. “I consider MSMP as one of the foundation partners of the medical community. I don’t think we’re going to find a substitute for it. The culture and commitment of MSMP will never be replaced.”

The “feeling of community that binds us together,” a function the Society served, will be missing, he said. “It’s a loss for Portland.”

Bryan Bohringer, CEO of the Oregon Medical Association, said medical societies and membership organizations in general “across the spectrum” are struggling, and the pandemic has only added to that pressure. “It’s very sad,” he said. “MSMP has been a faithful partner and a well-run organization.”

Mary McCarthy, MD, a psychiatrist and president of MSMP, agreed that the pandemic has been the straw that broke the camel’s back for many medical societies’ members who are hard-pressed to renew their dues. She said the drop in practices’ business during shutdowns and, for new doctors, the immense debt they accumulate in their training,
Legacy Heart Failure Program

We’ll manage the chronic condition so you can focus on holistic health

Chronic heart failure is difficult to manage. It requires specialized expertise, collaboration with multiple teams, and ongoing medication management that can overwhelm primary care providers.

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Our team offers:

- **Advanced medical and therapeutic management** for chronic heart failure.
- **A highly skilled staff**, including board-certified heart failure physician and specialized heart failure medical team.
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It’s another way we partner with you for a healthier community.

Our legacy is yours.
Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland is closing after 136 years

We at Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland (MSMP) are extremely proud of our long and rich history dating back to 1884. Over the last 136 years, MSMP has influenced the lives and practices of physicians throughout the Portland Metropolitan area; bringing physicians together to discuss important medical issues while encouraging a spirit of collegiality and camaraderie as members shared their personal and professional experiences and learned from one another through our informed publications and annual events. Our purpose has been to add value to both members’ professional and non-professional lives and to make the Medical Society an invaluable resource and social focal point for members.

With the onset of COVID-19, the most unprecedented pandemic of the last century, we have seen a transformation of the healthcare system and medical care across the country. This devastating epidemic along with a continual decline in membership has significantly impacted our organization both administratively and financially. The challenges brought on by COVID-19 also hindered MSMP from meeting all obligations of our members and the Society itself. We have spent countless hours exploring ways to revitalize the organization and secure a future for our members and staff. As a result of a decrease in business and revenue precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, our Board of Trustees made the difficult decision to close the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland which we expect will occur by December 31, 2020.

We recognize there are vital programs currently being utilized by our members and medical professionals throughout the state of Oregon. Below you will find information on the future for these programs.

Metropolitan Medical Foundation of Oregon (MMFO)
MSMP will distribute any remaining assets to its charitable 501(c)(3) foundation, Metropolitan Medical Foundation of Oregon (MMFO). MMFO is an independent organization that supports activities which improve health education and the delivery of health care to the community, offering small grants in support of this mission. MMFO will remain operational and continue with their grant-making activities.

You can learn more about MMFO programs and find their new contact information at www.MMFO.org.

Physician Wellness Program
Our most notable program, the Physician Wellness Program, has provided free, confidential counseling to over 200 physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners totaling over 1,000 appointments. Because our Wellness Program has been a key participant in the State-wide Oregon Wellness Program, our health care provider community will continue to have access to services under the same procedures we have previously used. The Oregon Wellness Program is committed to private sessions that respect the dignity and training of each clinician.

To schedule an appointment, call 541-242-2805 or visit www.OregonWellnessProgram.org where you can also find detailed profiles for each mental healthcare provider.

Senior Physician Group
The Senior Physician Group was formed as part of MSMP’s emphasis on encouraging doctors’ well-being and to allow senior physicians the opportunity for fellowship, conversation and information sharing. Dr. Mary McCarthy is collaborating with the Oregon Medical Association to continue the group and notice of future meetings will be sent out before the end of the year.

The Scribe
MSMP’s celebrated publication, The Scribe, has connected and informed the area’s medical community for nearly four decades. December will feature a robust history of MSMP as we close this remarkable chapter.

For the last 136 years, Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland has brought physicians together in community. We have delighted in holding events that allowed us to shake the hand of a colleague, embrace an old friend and share a bottle of wine during dinner. And we are saddened that, due to the pandemic, we cannot host a final farewell dinner for our extraordinary members and community partners.

There are no words to adequately express our gratitude to our members for your many years of support and dedication to the Medical Society. We appreciate you and are grateful for your service and dedication to the health and welfare of our community.

Thank you for sharing this experience and being part of our amazing journey.
added to the accumulation of existing challenges that have contributed to the closing of many medical societies, including MSMP.

“It’s really difficult, for everyone, to have made this decision,” she said. “I’m happy for the things the Society has been able to accomplish,” and that one of the most important of those accomplishments, the Physician Wellness Program, will survive after it is transferred to the Oregon Wellness Program. Also surviving, under the auspices of the OMA, will be MSMP’s Senior Physicians Group, which McCarthy and her psychiatrist compatriots founded.

Longtime members say the camaraderie and being able to associate with physician colleagues were strong draws for belonging.

“I just can’t believe the Medical Society is going away,” said Tom Hoggard, MD, a family physician and 1989 president. “It was a big part of my life the whole time I was practicing. It was networking; it was a feel-good thing.” The Society’s objective was: “What can we do to help the practice of medicine?” he said. “We did so many things together that we couldn’t do separately. I’m sad that the other doctors are going to miss that.”

Mary Burry, MD, a radiologist who served as 1999 president and is married to Hoggard, said when she joined MSMP, it removed the feeling of isolation she had practicing at Oregon Health & Science University and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

“It was my first connection with physicians off the Hill,” she said. “It was a big eye-opener to be associated with people in town. I was amazed at how incredibly active and dynamic the whole Society was.” Burry found the social connections particularly valuable, not just in and of themselves, but also once she later went into private practice and received many referrals from MSMP members she had gotten to know.

MSMP gave doctors the opportunity to meet physicians across disciplines and health systems, “to come together in a collegial way to share information and experiences and to socialize in a nonpartisan way,” said Ronald W. Schutz, MD, a cardiologist and longtime member. “The opportunities for doctors to get together shrank drastically over the course of my practice,” which extended from 1978 through 2015.

Schutz and others point to the dramatic expansion of physicians being employed as a major factor in the loss of incentive for members to join MSMP and similar organizations. “It is symptomatic of the fractionation of medicine. With physicians becoming employees of systems, you get less opportunities to interact” with colleagues outside your own niche, he said.

“I’ve been really sad to see the dissolution of the Society,” said George H. Caspar, MD, 1982 president, adding that if doctors are joining anything, they are gravitating toward their own specialty societies.

Evans concurred. “The way physicians have become employees of systems has taken them out of” the broader medical community and confined them into niches, he said. “MSMP worked to break down the silos, but we (in medicine) have become
“We did so many things together that we couldn’t do separately.

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—Tom Hoggard, MD
family physician and
former Medical Society president

“Stronger together”

Obstetrician-gynecologist Richard Allen, MD, who served as 1985 MSMP president, said he never considered not joining the Society, along with receiving the concomitant benefits such as obtaining liability insurance and having access to the Physicians’ Answering Service. But “it was the intangible benefits that are important, of associating with your peers,” he said. In addition to receiving referrals from those colleagues, Allen said the motivation for belonging was, to borrow the American Medical Association’s slogan, “Together we are stronger.”

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“Connecting physicians in community” has been the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland’s motto during the past decade, but it was the essence of the organization’s mission during all its 136 years.

As might be expected of so venerable an association, it has gone by several different names. Each one reflected the organization’s growth and reach. Founded in 1884 as the Portland Medical Society, it next became the Portland and Multnomah County Medical Society, beginning in 1903; then, in 1934, the Multnomah County Medical Society. Since 1995, recognizing that its membership encompassed the broader tri-county area, it has been known as the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland.

At the Medical Society’s founding, many area doctors did their training by preceptorships, but some physicians had received training in medical schools in other states or abroad. In 1887, members of the Society played an active role in founding the University of Oregon School of Medicine, the predecessor of Oregon Health & Science University. The Society also promoted health legislation and the formation of the city department of health and a state board of health.

These early efforts symbolized the beginning of the Society’s rich history of service to the medical community as well as the Portland area and the state, a commitment that has carried over right up to the present.

Along with the natural human tendency to want to rub shoulders with their colleagues, the prevailing connections physicians sought with their fellows through the Society varied over time.

For many of its first decades, the Society’s meetings were dominated by presentations of medical papers and the exchange of information about health and disease topics, such as the pasteurization of milk.

Foreshadowing issues and concerns that would reverberate into the 21st century, the Society in 1896 established a protective fund against lawsuits for malpractice against members. At about the same time, the Society began continuing efforts to strengthen the Oregon Board of Medical Examiners, now known as the Oregon Medical Board, to ensure practice standards for the profession.

In 1893, the Society invited medical students to attend its meetings. At its inaugural meeting, the Society had declared, apparently without argument, that female doctors would be excluded from membership. However, by 1902 that policy had been reversed, and the organization admitted its first woman as a member.

Other important early milestones were the Society’s affiliation with the American Medical Association, in 1901, and the Oregon State Medical Society – now the Oregon Medical Association – the following year. In 1905, the Society co-sponsored with the Oregon State Medical Society the AMA’s meeting in Portland in conjunction with the Lewis and Clark Exposition. The estimated attendance at the meeting was about 1,500.

By the 1930s, the Society was holding annual dinner meetings, which included the election of new officers. Presenters began introducing papers on the political and economic side of medicine. For example, at the 1936 meeting, the president-elect of the AMA discussed socialized medicine as proposed by the current administration, presenting cogent reasons for opposition to such action, which he maintained that practically the whole medical profession opposed.
In 1946, the Society began publishing monthly the *Bulletin* of the Multnomah County Medical Society, which continued for the next two decades. The *Bulletin* indicated the great extent the Society’s purpose and functions had broadened: By 1947, there were some 18 standing committees, such as for public relations, public health policies, school health, medical economics, bylaws, necrology and the women’s auxiliary, with special committees on cancer study, tuberculosis, maternal welfare, state industrial affairs and finance.

During the 1950s, with the Korean War underway and the threat of Russian atomic bombs, civilian defense became an important function of the Medical Society – one that has carried over to the present day in the form of its active participation in disaster planning. A physician official with Portland’s Medical Department of Disaster Relief and Civil Defense outlined in the *Bulletin* a medical defense plan for the city: The city was divided into sectors, with doctors designated to staff emergency areas in schools and other public buildings for the possible effects of atomic bombing. In 1951, a radioactive iodine therapy clinic was established at Good Samaritan Hospital.

A significant development for the Society beginning in the 1960s was its sponsorship of its annual Salishan Conference on the Oregon coast. The meetings emphasized socioeconomic and political issues as well as other challenges specific to the practice of medicine, with prominent invited guest speakers from the medical and political worlds. The conference continued from 1967 through 2000.

Most doctors were still independent, and a common theme the Society stressed was the importance of preserving the private practice of medicine. Consolidation was becoming evident in the Portland area by the late 1980s, as medical groups grew bigger and hospitals began merging and vertically integrating into larger health systems.

**Fellowship and networking**

For many years, if you practiced medicine in the Portland area, you belonged to the Medical Society, almost as a given, veteran members say. Before managed care took hold, networking among primary care doctors and specialists across town was a key attraction for being a member of the Society, which also offered a free physician referral service to the public.

As late as the early 1980s, the Society employed two associate executive directors in addition to an executive director. The organization ran several different departments, including for credentialing, a medical staffing placement service and an answering service. It sponsored a grievance and peer review committee to resolve misunderstandings and disputes involving member physicians and patients. The Society also offered debt-collection services and educational workshops and seminars.
The emphasis on connecting doctors in community grew during the tenure of Executive Director Brad Davis, according to Richard Allen, MD, an obstetrician-gynecologist who served as president of the Society in 1985. An example Allen pointed to was that Davis formed a group of past presidents who met together each year. “This collegiality persisted” throughout the time Davis led the Society, Allen said. “You still stayed connected. Brad was very good at connecting.”

Ophthalmologist George H. Caspar, MD, 1982 Society president, was president in Davis’ first year on the job, Caspar said. He credits Davis with, among many other ideas, initiating a program dubbed Medishare, which signed up physicians who agreed to see uninsured patients and those who had lost their jobs during the severe early 1980s recession. “Brad Davis had a big impact on the Society, he said. “You still stayed connected. Brad was very good at connecting.”

In January 1983, the Society under Davis also debuted its newspaper, The Portland Physician Scribe – colloquially long known as, and now formally called, The Scribe, and annually published The Doctors’ Little Black Book for the Portland Metropolitan Area, a listing of all area physicians licensed with the Oregon Medical Board. Another noteworthy member benefit, published through 2012, was the annual Physicians’ Resource Guide, a combination membership photo roster and listings for all area doctors, including by specialty, as well as hospitals and other health-related services. The Society’s leadership consciously crafted The Scribe to be as much of a true newspaper, not just a newsletter, as possible. It emphasized fair and balanced coverage, while still adhering to its dual role of serving as an advocate for physicians. The publication covered news related to medicine, with an emphasis on the local and regional. But it also devoted monthly focus sections to specific subjects such as physical therapy or the business of medicine that are useful to doctors’ practices. In addition, it covered new developments in local research, along with personal achievements by physicians and contributions they make to medicine and the community, as well as feature stories profiling providers in their off-hours pursuits. “The Scribe was really valuable in that it addressed interesting questions and gave people information about what other folks are doing around the community,” said Ronald W. Schutz, MD, a cardiologist and longtime member. “As an organ of the Society, it was a key piece. The Scribe gave us all a common ground we could use as a basis for a thoughtful conversation. What I thought was great was that it was quality writing; it was thoughtful journalism. It was apolitical, thoughtful and provided a filter for us to focus on things that are important in our area.”

OMA CEO Bryan Boehringer said The Scribe is an aspect of MSMP that will be particularly missed, calling it “unparalleled, especially for a county medical society.”

Allen said 1975 Society president and longtime member Ralph Crawshaw, MD, created the Society’s Mini-Internship Program, which matched decision-makers such as legislators with doctors, allowing participants to job-shadow physicians for a day and learn more about what practicing medicine was like. “It was a very positive thing,” Allen recalled. “It was for movers and shakers, influential people we wanted on the side of medicine.”

New directions in the ’90s and beyond

The 1990s brought marked changes to medicine and to the Medical Society. Leaders of the organization redefined how to serve its members, to provide economic and practice support to help physicians cope with the changes taking place in their practices. The Society began to emphasize offering goods and services to help doctors survive, such as a doctors’ buying service to purchase supplies and products for their practices and offices; a learning center to aid doctors in contract negotiations and selling their practice; and endorsed arrangements with outside companies for business consultation services and electronic claims processing.

The mid-1990s saw several milestones: a new name – the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland – and the first woman to preside as president, Marcia Darm, MD, both in 1995. The following year, Robert B. Delf Jr., who had served as associate executive director and chief operating officer for most of the time since he arrived at

“The collegiality with other physicians is, I think, the best part of being in MSMP. I always enjoyed meeting with other colleagues in different specialties.”

–Mary McCarthy, MD psychiatrist and current MSMP president
the Society in 1982, became executive director.

The Society by 1994 encompassed 2,000 members, but recognized that it needed to alter the way it operated in order to continue to be relevant. It closed down its numerous standing committees in place of ad hoc committees that met to address specific problems or challenges.

What’s more, MSMP’s board consisted of five female physicians and representatives from each of the area’s hospitals’ medical staffs. The Society also made residents and medical students on its board full-voting members. The presidencies of John W. Kendall Jr., MD, then-dean of OHSU’s School of Medicine, in 1991, and Donald E. Girard, MD, then-associate dean of graduate medical education, in 2002, helped MSMP develop closer ties between town and gown. Likewise, Kaiser Permanente physicians began joining the Society in greater numbers after Kaiser doctors such as Ernest Aebi, MD, in 1996, and Colin R. Cave, MD, in 2000, served as MSMP president, Caspar noted.

Delf spearheaded several initiatives during his time heading the Society from 1996 through 2011. These included co-founding or leading the growth of the Metropolitan Medical Foundation of Oregon (MMFO), which awards grants to community health projects, and DOCS, or Doctors Offering Community Service, a program that formalized a volunteer physician network and evolved to become Project Access NOW. Delf also supervised the transition and sale of Physicians’ Answering Service, founded in 1927 by the Society and owned and operated by MSMP until 1998. The service leased space with the Society from 1998 to 2005, when it moved to its own facility.

Delf served on numerous health care committees for Multnomah County and the state. Representing clinics and physicians, he played a key role, beginning in 2006, in MSMP’s participation in the Northwest Oregon Health Preparedness Organization Region 1, and in the acquisition of federal grants, both intended to help medical offices prepare for health or medical emergencies.

Once health systems began buying up medical groups and consolidating their medical staffs to ensure internal referrals, MSMP gradually began shifting its focus to supporting both employed doctors as well as those who remained in private practice. But as health systems began supplying business needs such as running an office and hiring staff, the need for services MSMP had provided began to slowly dwindle. To bolster doctors who remained in private practice, in the 2010s MSMP promoted group membership benefits, which offered medical groups discounts on professional liability insurance, as well as human resources, special listings, savings on annual dues and other benefits.

Paula Purdy, former director of operations for MSMP’s Medical Society Services Inc., who was the Society’s longest-serving employee, said Delf had a knack for seeing physicians’ needs and filling those in creative ways. MSMP often would get the ball rolling by starting a program and then
A program with national impact

Current Executive Director Amanda Borges, appointed in 2014, injected new life and brought youthful energy into the Society, giving it a renewed sense of purpose. She recognized the increasing stresses on providers and the growing awareness of burnout and mental health issues. Under her direction, in 2015 MSMP and the Metropolitan Medical Foundation of Oregon, for which she also was executive director, launched the Physician Wellness Program, the second such program in the nation after the concept was pioneered by the Lane County Medical Society and its CEO, Candice Barr.

The program, which, with the closing of MSMP, will continue under the Oregon Wellness Program (see accompanying story on page 14), offers free, confidential counseling specifically tailored to clinicians, with appointments available to them at their convenience. It also provided education about wellness topics, including a wellness library.

Borges began working for MSMP in 2003 as a recruiter in Medical Society Staffing, then served as administrative coordinator for many years before becoming executive director in 2014. MSMP trustees say Borges supplied the Society stability at crucial junctures.

“AMANDA BORGES was instrumental in establishing our Wellness Program,” said trustee John Evans, MD. Her steering of MSMP through that development and the financial challenges the Society has undergone in recent years “has been remarkable,” he said. She “has just been like a sunflower growing. She has blossomed in terms of her knowledge and skills as our CEO, and has continued to show the people skills with colleagues, but also to business” entities and other outreach she has performed to strengthen the Society. “I have loved to see her blossom into the competent, highly effective” leader she has been.

MSMP President Mary McCarthy, MD, also praised Borges and the Society’s veteran staff. Besides Borges’ 17 years with the Society, Deena Stradley, chief financial officer, joined 22 years ago; Sarah Parker, development associate, seven years ago, and Gary Whalen, director of operations, 20 years ago. They are among several employees who have worked for the Society for more than a decade.

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—Dick Clark
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later turning it over to another entity to run full time, she said. Delf helped MSMP create a physician credentialing service, which relieved physicians of having to fill out forms from numerous entities. In addition, Delf also helped start the Medical Society Staffing service’s temporary and temp-to-hire program, Purdy said.

After his retirement, the MMFO, in partnership with MSMP, inaugurated the annual Rob Delf Honorarium Award to recognize doctors and other citizens who contribute to the health of the community or to the practice of medicine.

According to a history compiled of the Society’s first 70 years, executive directors who preceded Davis and Delf included Clyde Foley, Roscoe Miller, Dick Layton, Bob Elsner and Gary Whalen.
years ago; and Janine Monaco Caswell, executive assistant, five years.

“They’ve been incredible, the different things they have come up with to keep the organization going forward,” McCarthy said. “They’ve been wonderful, all of them. Amanda has done everything she can to try to streamline and reduce expenses, including the staff’s own paychecks.”

Borges was able to inspire large donations to the Physician Wellness Program. Notably, “The Portland IPA deserves a lot of credit for its substantial backing,” said Evans, as well as OHSU Foundation, The Portland Clinic Foundation, Women’s Healthcare Associates, The Oregon Clinic, the law firms Ater Wynne and Hart Wagner, Oregon Anesthesiology Group, and numerous organizations, medical groups, physicians and other individuals who have donated generously to the Physician Wellness Program since its inception five years ago. The Doctors Company, which handles professional liability insurance, was a donor and a longtime partner of the Society, as well.

“I compliment Amanda Borges for her leadership and her implementation of the Physician Wellness Program,” said Dick Clark, CEO of The Portland Clinic, who has served on the program’s advisory board for five years. He noted that Borges has given presentations about the program to medical societies in Oregon and other states, and thus many doctors and other providers across the country have benefited from the MSMP program’s model. There are now more than 35 such programs.

“Amanda Borges is the heart and soul of that program,” Clark said. “She did wonderful community service, and she should be commended for that. We thought so much of the program is why we contributed financially.”

With the intention of promoting collegiality among physicians and adding value to their professional and off-duty lives, MSMP during Borges’ tenure also began offering special events such as the Battle of the Doctor Bands and the Scrub Run, as well as continuing medical education and required courses for medical staff. The Society also expanded membership eligibility to physician assistants, podiatrists and nurse practitioners.

Over its 136 years of existence, the Society occupied five different locations: downtown on Southwest 11th Avenue; above the Multnomah Athletic Club in a former mansion on Southwest Park Place; overlooking the Willamette River on Southwest Kelly Avenue; alongside the river on Southwest Macadam Avenue; and finally, in a space on Southwest Yamhill Street downtown. At the end, the staff worked remotely from home to save expenses, continuing into the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aside from its programs that will survive, now the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland itself will exist only in the memory of all the people who have been involved and cared about what it did to make the Portland area a better place for all.

Sources

TO OUR FIRST RESPONDERS AND
ALL ESSENTIAL MEDICAL PERSONNEL
WHO RISK THEIR LIVES DAILY
FOR US.

THANK YOU.
WE SEE YOU.
WE SUPPORT YOU.

FROM THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF METROPOLITAN PORTLAND,
METROPOLITAN MEDICAL FOUNDATION OF OREGON,
OREGON MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, PORTLAND IPA, OWP, MSMP WELLNESS PROGRAM,
AND THE FOUNDATION FOR MEDICAL EXCELLENCE.
“As a medical student, you feel like your voice can get lost in the scheme of things, but I felt like I was a valued member of this board. It helped me grow from a first-year medical student to, now, a graduating student. I think the big draw for me was the community connection. I was new to Portland and was getting more involved in med school. The networking was an obvious advantage, and to be able to sit in a room with well-respected physicians from the community was an honor.”

— Kylie Seeley
a medical student who serves as the current MSMP student trustee

By Jon Bell
For The Scribe

Throughout its 136 years, the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland has always recruited and encouraged younger doctors to join the society and welcomed them in with all the warmth and opportunity it afforded its veteran members. It also involved them in the society’s governance, creating trustee roles for a resident and a student.

So, the MSMP’s shuttering is not only a loss to the veterans of Portland’s medical scene, but also to those up-and-comers who are at the front end of their caregiving careers.

“It’s heartbreaking to have it close, but I’m so grateful for the opportunities it provided and all the people I was able to meet,” said Kylie Seeley, a medical student at Oregon Health & Science University and the MSMP’s current and final student trustee. “I was just so honored to be a part of this. As a medical student, you feel like your voice can get lost in the scheme of things, but I felt like I was a valued member of this board. It helped me grow from a first-year medical student to, now, a graduating student.”

Seeley, who grew up in Northern California with parents who were physicians, said she first joined the MSMP in May 2017 at the end of her first year at OHSU. She learned about the organization from a grad student who’d been serving as the student trustee but who was on her way out and looking for a replacement. Seeley said it seemed like a great opportunity.

“I think the big draw for me was the community connection,” she said. “I was new to Portland and was getting more involved in med school. The networking was an obvious advantage, and to be able to sit in a room with well-respected physicians from the community was an honor.”

During her time with the MSMP, Seeley said she was able to participate in all the board meetings and advocate for trainees to be involved in the MSMP’s Physician Wellness Program. She also got to be a member of the Metropolitan Medical Foundation of Oregon and review research grant applications.

“That was a really fun aspect of that,” Seeley said. “Being a medical student, you see the end result of things. Being able to be in the room with people making big decisions like that was a great learning experience.”

The networking through the society was valuable for Seeley, as was the career advice and suggestions she received from other members throughout the past three years.

“When you think about the longevity of the MSMP and its history, it’s just a big loss for the Portland area in general, but especially the medical community,” she said.

Like Seeley, Eric Ryan, MD, joined MSMP at the recommendation of another younger member about two years ago. An internal medicine physician completing his residency at Providence Medical Group—Northwest, Ryan is the MSMP’s last resident trustee. He said he heard stories of the MSMP’s “glory days,” when it hosted many more events, meetings and other gatherings than it did in recent times.

When COVID-19 hit, all but eliminating in-person meetings and get-togethers, Ryan said activity dried up even more and the future of the society became even less certain. Even so, Ryan said trustees focused hard on what the MSMP valued and how those programs and components could be sustained. That meant finding a home for the Physican Wellness Program, which is becoming part of the Oregon Wellness Program, among other priorities.

Though his involvement with the society was impacted by COVID-19, Ryan said his time as trustee was valuable.

“For me it was a great experience,” he said. “Networking with folks was really helpful. As a student and resident, you are around a lot of doctors in a clinical capacity, so it’s interesting to see them outside of that context. You get exposure to how you can take your own role and expand it beyond the hospital and clinic.”

He also said being involved in the MSMP allowed him to see what a difference a group of like-minded professionals can make in their community.

“It’s been nice to see, especially through something like the wellness program, how you can make a sizable difference for folks in your local community,” he said. “It’s not necessarily an easy thing to do, but if a small number of people set something as a priority, which MSMP did, you can make it happen.”

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— Eric Ryan, MD
MSMP’s current resident trustee
When Candice Barr established the Lane County Medical Society’s (LCMS) Provider Wellness Program in 2012, she knew the key to it was confidentiality and that providers needed to talk to psychologists—without mandate and of their own choosing—who understood physicians and their practice.

It was the first such program in the country and was designed around barriers Barr, LCMS's longtime CEO, knew kept physicians from seeking the care they needed and deserved.

"I'd been there for three decades and I really thought I understood physicians and their profession reasonably well. I knew we needed to design something really unique that they would trust," she said, noting LCMS founded the program after losing three members to suicide the previous year.

The LCMS Provider Wellness Program had nearly 200 visits in its first two and a half years, and raised more than $600,000 to endow the program so visits could be free. Former Gov. John Kitzhaber proclaimed March 2012 as Physician Wellness Month and sent Barr a letter praising her efforts to increase awareness of physician wellness and create a program to address it.

In addition to confidentiality and the absence of a third party to mandate or monitor physician visits, the LCMS Provider Wellness Program offered faster visits, usually within 48–72 hours compared to the three to six weeks of other mental health programs. And the program was sanctioned by physicians for other physicians.

This was the advice Barr offered to Amanda Borges, the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland’s executive director, when Borges sought guidance about establishing the Physician Wellness Program for health care professionals in the Portland metro area. It became the second program in the country in 2015 and quickly saw success because of its confidentiality, voluntary participation and team of psychologists who understand physicians and their practice.

“Amanda was a very quick study and was able to put this program together in record time for MSMP. The utilization in the tri-county area has been significant,” Barr said.

Over the last six years, MSMP’s counseling team has held 1,107 sessions and helped more than 215 members and nonmembers. And, while MSMP is closing at the end of the year, its Physician Wellness Program will continue to operate under the Oregon Wellness Program (OWP). Its team of psychologists will now be able to serve physicians not only in the Portland metro area, but throughout Oregon through OWP’s statewide telehealth service.

Today, there are 35 physician wellness programs across the country and Barr, who has advised many other medical societies about establishing their own, said the American Association of Medical Society Executives has published a manual to help spread the information.

Though she retired in 2016, Barr still receives requests for advice about how to establish and maintain an effective physician wellness program. “It’s been really gratifying. I spend a lot of time calling into boards of trustees’ meetings for various medical societies that want to duplicate the program. It’s been one of the honors of my life to be able to help in this way.”

”It’s been one of the honors of my life to be able to help in this way.”

—Candice Barr, retired CEO of the Lane County Medical Society, who pioneered physician wellness programs
MSMP Physician Wellness Program Indicators
January 2015 – November 30, 2020

148 out of 207 healthcare providers who have utilized the Physician Wellness Program have access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) within their own company.

Number of Clients Served: 215
Number of Sessions: 1,107

Clients and Sessions

Clients by Licensure

Clients by County

As of November 30, 2020

January 2015 – November 30, 2020
MMFO will carry on its vital health-care mission

By John Rumler
For The Scribe

In the midst of the nation’s worst pandemic in 100 years, Boost Oregon, a nonprofit founded in 2015, is providing critically needed education about COVID-19 and potential vaccines. It is recruiting peer advocates among Black, Latinx and immigrant communities to do outreach education within their own communities.

Boost Oregon is just one of 87 vital community health projects in the metro region (including Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington and Clark counties) that has received financial support, at a critical time, from the Metropolitan Medical Foundation of Oregon (MMFO).

Although the Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland (MSMP) is closing its doors this month, MMFO will continue its mission of improving health education and the delivery of health care through small grants.

An independent charitable organization that has received support from MSMP staff and leadership, the MMFO, since 1992, has awarded more than $133,000 in grants, a figure that has reaped far greater benefits than its modest amount may imply, say many grant beneficiaries.

At first, grants were awarded in the area of child immunization because of a nationwide measles resurgence, but MMFO quickly diversified its grant giving.

Today, the scope and variety of the grantees run the gamut – from $500 grants for bee sting kits, pulse oximetry units, medication resource books as well as larger requests for translation services, health education programs and special clinics serving the needs of children, immigrants and other underserved populations.

The MMFO’s largest grant to date was $26,000, allocated in 2001, to the Multnomah County Immunization Program/Merck Vaccines “Model Cities Hepatitis B Immunization Project,” with a goal of helping middle-school children get immunized.

John Evans, MD, who has a long history as a Medical Society leader, noted that MMFO awards unique grants such as one for a HbA1c machine for an area free clinic that was one of the largest that had been made up to that point and was done “with a great deal of trepidation due to the amount.

“Grants like these can fund a project that otherwise would not be possible – despite the relatively modest price tag. This allows nonprofits who operate on thin margins to enrich their program offerings beyond business as usual, to experiment with promising ideas, meet significant one-time needs or expand upon an existing strategy to make it even more effective.”

– Katrina Ratzlaff
Wallace

Small grant, big impact

Today, MMFO and grantees focus on leveraging resources, building capacity for health, wellness and healthy communities. They champion Board Member Karen Elliott, JD’s premise that “you can do a lot with a little when you know your community and its needs.”

Grantees have the opportunity to develop leadership and grant writing skills and learn about the value of sharing feedback and other “lessons learned” to inform stakeholders and others involved in future projects.

Shortly after its inception, MMFO began providing Mini-grants of as much as $500 for specific purposes, which entails just a one-page application, while another program, started in 2009, provides Catalyst grants of as much as $2,000 and requires a bit more information.

“We realize that we are a small foundation with very limited resources,” said Krieger, founding MMFO board member and president. “Our grants
have never strayed from our mission, and we understand that our role is to act as a catalyst for those who have ideas that will fill a specific need.”

Another longstanding MMFO focus is medical provider wellness. In 1997, MMFO provided a grant to The Foundation for Medical Excellence for the creation of the Center for Physician Well Being and, in 2015, MMFO collaborated with MSMP to launch the Physician Wellness Program.

An assistant professor at OHSU, hospitalist Elizabeth Lahti, MD, is a co-founder of the Northwest Narrative Medicine Collaborative (NWNMC), which was awarded a Catalyst grant for the “Narrative Medicine Monthly Workshop Series.” This series hosts regular meetings, now via Zoom, where health care professionals, students, patients and caregivers explore their journeys of illness and wellness through stories.

Just two years ago, NWNMC was registering as a nonprofit, putting together a board of directors and holding strategic planning meetings. Now, with a solid infrastructure, its meetings are so well-attended they’ve opened a branch in Seattle and launched a live, local storytelling event, “The Interstitium,” that drew impressive audiences until it was put on hold due to the pandemic.

“The MMFO grant was relatively small, yet it’s impact was very big,” Lahti says. “It helped NWNMC change our question from, ‘How do we become an organization?’ to ‘What impact do we want our organization to have?’" “It was an honor that longstanding leaders in health care like the MSMP and MMFO believed in us, and it gave us the confidence to apply for other grants,” she said. “We are thrilled to now be a community partner with Lewis & Clark College on a Mellon Grant in 2021.”

Another non-profit, Wallace, (formerly Wallace Medical Concern) a FQHC since 2014, has received numerous grants from MMFO through the years – the latest being $2,000 awarded in fall 2016 for a Reach Out and Read program in its primary clinic.

The grant purchased books for more than 200 families, trained Wallace pediatric care providers, and created a reading corner in the clinic waiting room, as well as providing project coordination, explains Katrina Ratzlaff, Wallace’s director of community development.

“Grants like these can fund a project that otherwise would not be possible – despite the relatively modest price tag. This allows nonprofits who operate on thin margins to enrich their program offerings beyond business as usual, to experiment with promising ideas, meet significant one-time needs or expand upon an existing strategy to make it even more effective. Thank you MMFO, for many years of support!”

Going forward, according to Krieger, MMFO will rely on donors to continue its grant-making activity. “We were fortunate to have The Scribe and the MSMP newsletter to share our message with MSMP members. Although the MSMP will no longer be here, the member community still exists and we will develop our own tools to reach those who have donated in the past as well as to identify new sources of funding and keep supporters updated about our activities and to ask for their help.”

Searching for funding?

The Metropolitan Medical Foundation of Oregon funds projects that support activities which improve health education and the delivery of health care to the community.

These mini-grants provide up to $500 and are awarded quarterly.

- APPLY TODAY!

Fourth quarter deadline is December 31.

For grant applications and to learn more about MMFO, please visit www.MMFO.org.

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AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know and love – same low prices, great selection and ease of use, only with the added benefit of supporting MMFO! For every purchase you make at smile.amazon.com, the Amazon Foundation donates 0.5% of the eligible purchase price to MMFO.

With Fred Meyer Community Rewards you will continue to earn Rewards Points, Fuel Points and Rebates, but you will also be donating to MMFO every time you use your Fred Meyer Rewards Card.

With just a few simple changes, you can support the Metropolitan Medical Foundation of Oregon in your daily activities.

For details on how to register with AmazonSmile or Fred Meyer Community Rewards, visit www.MMFO.org and click ‘Donate’. You can also search for Metropolitan Medical Foundation of Oregon at smile.amazon.com or www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards.

The MMFO’s mission is to support activities which improve health education and the delivery of health care to the community.
Changing the Culture

OWP promotes the well-being of Oregon’s Healthcare Professionals.*

CONFIDENTIAL COUNSELING


oregonwellnessprogram.org

*Physicians, PAs, & APP are eligible for complimentary services through the OWP.

To schedule your complimentary appointment, call 541-242-2805