

## President's Message: Educate, Mentor and Inspire



As promised in my first column of the year, we are focusing our attention on specific topics each month in *the Message*. This month the focus is on medical education and very specifically, medical education in Spokane. We are pleased to have a total of five articles written by guest writers for this edition. Two of the articles are by medical students, one of whom is in

his first year of medical school in the WWAMI WSU Spokane program, and the other now in her second year, having spent her first year in Spokane. The other three articles are by physicians in our community who are educators and mentors for medical students.

When you read the articles, I think you will get a good feel for the many reasons that an expansion of medical education in Spokane is not only a good idea, it is imperative. You will be amused and touched by the perspective of the students who clearly tell how they have benefited by their experiences in Spokane. An excellent medical education is so much more than learning basic sciences and learning how to take a good history and do a good physical exam. I'm sure we can all think back to someone we encountered along the path of our education who made a real difference for us. Most likely that difference was not a result of activities of formal education, but more as a mentor or as a role model for what we aspired to someday be. For me, it was community physicians right here in Spokane who were my preceptors in residency that were the most influential in my development. We have that opportunity to be influential on the next generation of physicians, and to help inspire them.

You will also get the perspective of the educator or mentor in the articles by Drs. Novan, Layton, and Poncher. These articles helped me to understand that we are on the right track here in Spokane. The reference Dr. Novan makes to reform of medical education (I actually read the article he references) indicates that Spokane is poised to be on the forefront of new methods of medical education that better integrate formal learning and clinical education. But let's face it; we will fail if we don't have enough participation of the clinical community in efforts to be involved with medical education. We need to have a culture of education in Spokane. That culture is evident in some areas, but needs to grow. These writers make a strong case for more participation in helping that culture to grow, and the Spokane County Medical Society is committed, as part of its mission, to help facilitate building on the solid base of medical education we already have.

The business community is strongly in support of the development of a four-year medical school in Spokane. WSU and UW are behind it as well. Now the medical community needs to get behind it in a bigger way. My plea is to have more community physicians who are willing to engage in educating these new students. The value to the students is clear. The value to our community is clear. The value to each of us is clear who already need, or someday will need, a good physician who was educated, and mentored, and inspired by another physician along the way.

By Gary Knox, MD  
2010 SCMS President

