

Referred to: Reference Committee A

Report 14, Minority and Cross-Cultural Affairs Committee
To: Minnesota Medical Association House of Delegates
Convening September 17, 2008

Current members of the committee include Fatima Jiwa, M.D., chair, Dionne Hart, M.D., vice chair, Tiffany Beckman, M.D., Barbara Bentz, M.D., Juan Bowen, M.D., Romona DeJesus, M.D., Joycelyn Dorscher, M.D., Sandra Eliason, M.D., Armantina Espinosa, M.D., Natalia Kramarevsky, M.D., Kieth Lindor, M.D., Elena Polukhin, M.D., Himanshu Sharma, M.D., Marie Witte, M.D., and Mrinal Patnaik, M.D., resident section.

The Minority and Cross Cultural Affairs Committee has met four times since the 2007 Annual Meeting: December 5, 2007; February 6, 2008; May 7, 2008; and August 6, 2008.

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This year the committee started its work of educating physicians about the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care (CLAS) standards. The MMA Board of Trustees approved the committee's request to educate physicians about the CLAS standards in November of 2007.

The committee's focus is on those standards that are federally mandated and pertain to language access. The committee has been developing its own training presentation tailored to physicians. It has also seized on an opportunity to develop a physician-oriented training session by partnering with UCare and the University of Minnesota's Program in Translation and Interpreting, which are both members of the Interpreter Stakeholders Work Group (ISWG), which is a subgroup of the Upper Midwest Translators and Interpreters Association.

In addition, the committee reviewed educational resources about providing interpreter services and started posting them on the MMA's website. It also worked with the staff of *Minnesota Medicine* on a story about improving the quality of interpreter services. The story was published in the May edition of the magazine.

The committee took on this project as part of the strategic direction it chose in 2007, which is that during the next three to five years the committee will "contribute to MMA efforts to drive patient-centered care by helping our colleagues understand their patient populations and by providing needed information and education in the field of minority health."

In the area of mentoring, the committee requested that the MMA Foundation donate \$10,000 to Minnesota's Future Doctors, a joint program sponsored by the University of Minnesota and Mayo medical schools. The program identifies promising undergraduate students and provides them with experiences designed to help them become doctors. The foundation accepted the request and made the donation. It started a mentoring section on the MMA's website. The committee also successfully transitioned the running of its

mentoring program for students at Roosevelt High School to the MMA Medical Student Section. Committee members continue to support the program by volunteering at events and being available as a resource to the medical students.

The committee sent a letter to influential Minnesota lawmakers expressing disappointment that the Legislature's Interpreter Services Work Group, which was formed by the Legislature to provide recommendations for providing and paying for language services in Minnesota's clinics and hospitals, failed to recommend that insurers be required to reimburse physicians for interpreter services. The committee told lawmakers that private insurers should cover these services because the current system disproportionately burdens community clinics, hospitals, and private clinics that work with immigrant and refugee populations.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the committee members and MMA staff for their valuable input and hard work during the year.

Fatima Jiwa, M.D.
Chair