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Speak Up and Be Heard

Gosh, it's time to write this article again! So I was thinking—no worries, I'll just wait until after the first First Tuesday at the Capitol and write about what the House of Medicine is advocating for in this legislative session. There, done, simple. I've done that lots of times; it takes about 10 minutes and it's important stuff, stuff you guys need to know something about. Plus the rattlesnake wranglers were at the Capitol and they are fun to watch and make a great picture, and I could talk about that too.

But this First Tuesday seemed different to me. For one, I work at Seton now, and I'm staffing Brackenridge this week. I saw a nice lady with Medicaid (who couldn't have afforded to see me in my private practice) complaining of hand numbness and weakness. Initially I thought it was just carpal tunnel. But after an exam and some testing, it turned out to be ALS. It made me grateful that I was in a place where I can see people who don't always have good insurance. And staffing Brackenridge makes me aware of how much need is out there. So I go down to First Tuesdays and we are fighting some of the same battles we've fought for years and we need to continue to fight—fair policies from insurance companies, patient safety and scope of practice, public health (smoking in public places, vaccinations) and funding for Graduate Medical Education. Medicaid is always mentioned but feels like such a losing battle that sometimes it only gets one sentence, like "Please do something with Medicaid."

The Capitol was packed on this First Tuesday! I mean it was difficult to walk through the rotunda and up and down the stairs because the sanctuary cities issue was being debated in both chambers. There was a palpable tension in the Capitol that I've not run across before. I hear the same tension in the news when they are talking about D.C.—people trying to figure out how to get their head around this new administration and wondering what's going on, and perhaps, what's going to change?

I found myself thinking how much easier things were to handle when it was the same old, same old. This conflict, this possibility of doing things differently, this . . . change . . . is now making me nervous. I realize change does that because it brings up the chance of loss, but it has the chance of gain as well. And really, nowhere is change more important to our lives and wellbeing than in health care.

I am still hoping that something breaks lose for the better. That it somehow gets easier to see and care for patients than it is now. That we don't let people suffer for lack of access to health care. It needs to change. And yes, we have got to keep pushing for Medicaid to improve.

I think now is the time to speak up—to be heard—especially for the House of Medicine. When else will we ever have a better chance to actually make a difference for our patients? So work to understand the issues, and tell your stories and your patients' stories. Believe me, there are lots of other folks out there telling theirs. Don't forget that the next First Tuesday is April 4. We had a great turn out this last time and really would love to see even more white coats in the Capitol this next time. Think about it.

Meanwhile, it is comforting that there are still people out there who can mess with a rattlesnake and not (or very rarely) get bit. They may be in the safest place of all this year.

Sara Austin, MD
TCMS President
2017 TCMS/AISD Athletic Physicals

Each year TCMS teams with the Austin Independent School District to provide free athletic physicals to students who are uninsured or have financial restrictions or other barriers to health care. In 2016, more than 1150 students received station-based exams. For many, this is their only well-visit with a physician for the year.

TCMS is now looking for physician volunteers for 2017. Exams are given over four nights to middle and high school students with two shifts per night.

To volunteer, contact Diane Naishtat at dnaishtat@tcms.com or call 512-206-1249.
More than 40 TCMS physicians, residents, students and Alliance members gathered at the Capitol on Tuesday, February 7. During visits with local legislators, the TMA/TCMS legislative agenda was introduced.

The 2017 Prescription to Keep Texas Healthy agenda prescribes healthy goals for the 85th Texas Legislature. It includes the advancement of patient care; keeping a strong and fair Texas Medical Board; protecting medical liability reform caps; requiring the same standard of care for telemedicine; investing wisely in mental health and public health; stopping insurance tactics that cause surprise medical bills; funding graduate medical education adequately; upholding scope of practice to protect patients and using technology—not mandates—to address "doctor shopping" and opioid diversion with the Texas Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

Bills to Watch

Budget
Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar estimates that lawmakers would have $104.9 billion in the state’s budget to spend.
- House Bill 1: The House proposes spending about $108.9 billion in state general revenue dollars.
- Senate Bill 1: The Senate proposes spending about $103.6 billion in general revenue dollars.

Subcommittees will examine sections of state funding, hear testimony and make recommendations. A conference committee comprised of select House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committee members will hammer out the final state budget which then goes to both chambers for a vote.

Scope of Practice
- Senate Bill 681/House Bill 1415: Would allow for advance practice registered nurses to practice independently from physicians, in effect granting full diagnosis and independent prescribing authority.
- House Bill 593: Would allow for prescriptive authority for psychologists.

Insurance
- Senate Bill 507: Relating to Balance/"Surprise" Billing. TMA is working closely with the author to come up with a bill that is beneficial for patients and physicians. This bill would expand mediation to all facility-based providers as well as emergency care providers.
- Senate Bill 680/House Bill 1464: Would allow a physician to override health plans’ use of "step therapy" to substitute prescribed drugs for chronically ill patients.

TCMS physicians met with Senator Zaffirini to discuss health care legislation during First Tuesdays at the Capitol.

Join your colleagues for the remaining First Tuesdays lobby days April 4 and May 2.

Appointments with local legislators and briefings on legislators and bills impacting medicine will be sent prior to each First Tuesday.

Register at www.texmed.org/firsttuesdays. For more information, contact TCMS Senior Director of Physician Services and Community Relations Stephanie Triggs at striggs@tcms.com or 512-206-1124.
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Weekend Warm-Up at the Tesla Automotive Showroom

Physicians were treated to technology updates, test drives, food and prizes at Tesla’s newest showroom. A raffle for a 24-hour Tesla test drive was won by Jessica Rubino, MD.

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- People accessing health care are NOT routinely tested for HIV.
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100 years ago on April 16, 1917, Charles Pelphrey was born in Austin, Texas. From polio vaccine distribution to groundbreaking pathology and blood work, Dr. Pelphrey was a major contributor in the establishment of Austin's medical community.

After graduating from Stephen F. Austin High School in 1935, he went on to study at UT Austin and is an alumnus of the inaugural class of UT Southwestern Medical School.

Naval service during World War II delayed the start of his local medical practice. After the war, Pelphrey and his wife Elvira moved back to Austin and he started work at Seton Hospital as the city's first pathologist. "This was back when Hwy 290 and Airport Boulevard were made of gravel," he says with a chuckle.

In 1948, Pelphrey opened his own practice in a 400 square foot apartment near UT. It was there that Clinical Pathology Laboratories (CPL) was born. Today CPL is the largest privately-owned clinical laboratory in the nation with over 1,800 employees.

Establishing CPL is far from the only medical contribution Pelphrey made to Austin. Over the course of his career, he played major roles in the distribution of the Salk polio vaccine in Travis County; he was the first physician to introduce Rh testing in Austin; he helped make the administration of Pap tests routine for Central Texas women and was involved in the establishment of the Travis County Medical Society Blood Bank in 1951.

Dr. Pelphrey served as TCMS President in 1967. In 2008, he was named the Lady Bird Johnson Humanitarian of the Year. Austin High School inducted him to their Alumni Hall of Fame. And for his 100th birthday, TCMS will recognize his 70 years of medical service in Travis County with a special commendation.

Retirement for Dr. Pelphrey may have meant no more long hours in a lab, but it did not stop him from spending long hours in a studio. He decided to try his hand at stained glass. "I always wanted to make stained glass, but never had time," he explains. "So, I set up a studio and learned." His work now graces a mission in China, St. Martin's Lutheran Church at 15th and Rio Grande, as well as homes and businesses throughout Austin.

"He's my hero," says longtime friend and former employee James Johnson who will be attending Pelphrey's 100th birthday party in San Antonio. Johnson is fond of pointing out that every single resident of Central Texas has been positively affected by Pelphrey's work. "You can't say that about anyone else," Johnson says proudly.
Can you guess which TCMS member worked in a toy factory? Or which one enjoys archery? Or which one grows a variety of tomatoes as a hobby? Here’s your chance to get to know the TCMS Executive Board.

**Sara Austin, MD**  
**President**

Favorite vacation destination? Anywhere!
I am reading *Cold Comfort Farm* and I enjoy watching *Modern Family*—it still makes me laugh.

**Jeffrey Apple, MD**  
**President Elect**

Our household includes Cody, a Labrador; Sarafina the cat and Shelly our tortoise.
My hobby is traditional archery and my favorite vacation destination is Argentina.

**Robert Cowan, MD**  
**Immediate Past President**

My first job was House Sergeant for the Texas House of Representatives.

I’m reading *Catch-22* with *All Quiet on the Western Front* next.

St. Barts is my favorite vacation destination and when not there, I watch *Caribbean Life* on HGTV.

**Tony Aventa, MD**  
**Secretary-Treasurer**

My first job was at Dillard’s selling men’s fashion.

I’m reading *The China Study, Where you Go is Not Who You’ll Be* (as my girls are getting older) and *The Last Colony* (part of the *Old Man’s War* series).

Bella, our rescue dog, is part of the family.

**Anas Daghestani MD**  
**Member At Large**

My first job was on an assembly line in a toy factory.

My hobby is tomatoes. This year I am planting American, French and Italian Heirlooms.

**Nancy Foster, MD**  
**Member At Large**

My first job was working in the 1886 Room in the Driskill Hotel. I made the pimento cheese for the "old bakery sandwich."

What am I currently reading? Work emails, but I enjoy books on history and vacationing anywhere with mountains and no cell connection.
Jonathan MacClements, MD
Member At Large

My first job was a nurse’s aide at a hospital in South Africa.

I’m reading *Let Me Heal* and my hobbies include flying planes, scuba diving and playing the bagpipes.

Adam Weinfeld, MD
Chair, Board of Ethics

My favorite vacation destinations are Iceland, Galapagos Islands, Grand Canyon and Big Bend.

My whole family loves *Shark Tank*, especially the kids. For fun, I enjoy large-format painting on canvases up to 4x6 feet.

Ghassan Salman, MD
Member At Large

My favorite vacation destination is any beach, especially Hawaii.

I’m currently reading *Getting to YES* and *Big-Hearted Leadership*, but to relax I watch *Seinfeld*.

Belda Zamora, MD
Delegation Representative

My favorite vacation destination is Spain, where Javier (Otero, MD) and I got married 23 years ago.

I enjoy watching European soccer games on TV with my 18-year-old son and running marathons.

Todd Shepler, MD
Member At Large

My first job was busboy at Furr’s Cafeteria.

May favorite vacation destination is Costa Rica.

At home, I watch *Stranger Things* and *Game of Thrones* and run for fun.

Stephen Clark, MD
We Are Blood Representative

My first job was as a shoe shine boy.

My favorite vacation destination is Flathead Lake, Montana.

I’m currently reading *Thank You for Being Late* by Tom Friedman.

Join the Executive Board for the installation of officers: March 23, 6:30pm, Renaissance Hotel Arboretum.
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Get to know colleagues at social events such as Weekend Warm-Ups and Family Socials

Help uninsured students—volunteer for TCMS/AISD athletic physicals

Insurance at a discount with TMLT and TMAIT

Journal: TCMS Journal provides timely articles regarding Travis County’s medical community.

Knowledge Center at TMA is available for questions regarding regulations, liability, etc.

List of businesses online in the TCMS Resource Guide for practice or personal needs

Medical record storage, retrieval and disposal available with TCMS Document & Data Services
No cost Auto Program to find the vehicle you want without the hassle

Opportunity to participate on TCMS committees

Parade to the capitol in your white coat on First Tuesdays to make medicine’s voice heard

Quick info in the TCMS e-News on upcoming events and new members

Reference tools: DocbookMD for you and Physician Search at www.tcms.com for you and your patients

Spanish with a medical slant for you/your staff

tcms.com for latest news and events

Use TCMS Staffing Services to find the right hire for your practice

Valuable resources for your practice

What to Know for the Week – an informative e-newsletter for office staff

Extremely helpful with timely topics such as MACRA, cyber security and more

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Diabetes in Travis County: Trends & Comorbidities

Philip Huang, MD, MPH, Medical Director, Austin Public Health
Sarah Seidel, DrPH, Austin Public Health

Diabetes Prevalence, Morbidity and Mortality
Diabetes remains a significant cause of morbidity and mortality among Travis County residents. As of 2015, it is estimated that 7.5 percent of Travis County residents (approximately 82,000 adults) have been diagnosed with diabetes. The prevalence of diabetes in Travis County remains lower than in Texas as a whole (11.4 percent of Texas residents)\(^1\). Trends for Travis County and Texas are shown in Figure 1. While the prevalence of diabetes in Texas is rising, trends for Travis County are less clear due to small sample size in 2013\(^2\) but may indicate a slight increase or a leveling off.

Differences in the prevalence of diabetes exist by age, gender, race/ethnicity, income level, education level, insurance status and employment status group (Figure 2). The highest prevalence of diabetes is found among older adults (age 45 and up), African-Americans, Hispanics and individuals without a high school diploma. Lower income adults, women, uninsured adults and unemployed adults also report higher rates of diabetes.

Hospitalizations
There were 1,152 potentially preventable hospitalizations due to diabetes in Travis County in 2013, 430 occurring in individuals with short-term complications (hypo- and hyperglycemia, seizures, shock and coma) and 722 in individuals with long-term complications (retinopathy, kidney disease, neuropathy and cardiovascular disease). This equated to over $46 million dollars in hospital charges in 2013\(^3\).

Mortality
In Travis County, the mortality rate from diabetes has dropped from 26.5 per 100,000 in 1999 to 12.8 per 100,000 in 2014. Despite improvements, disparities in mortality rates for diabetes still exist among racial/ethnic groups. For combined years 2010-2014 African-Americans had the highest mortality rate due to diabetes (28.9 per 100,000), followed by Hispanics (25.4) and Whites (11.1)\(^4\). From 2010-2014 there were 276 deaths due to diabetes among Whites, 88 deaths among African-Americans, 170 deaths among Hispanics and 11 deaths recorded among Asians\(^5\). (Note: small numbers likely reflect underreporting of diabetes on the Texas death certificate.)

Comorbidities
Adults with diabetes in Travis County have higher rates of other chronic diseases or conditions such as obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and depression than adults without diabetes (Figure 3). Of Travis County adults with diabetes, 57 percent are obese, 75 percent have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, 71 percent have been told they have high cholesterol and 26 percent have been diagnosed with depression\(^6\).

Depression and diabetes is a common comorbidity with serious adverse health outcomes. The association between diabetes and depression is bi-directional\(^7,8\). Epidemiologic studies have shown the prevalence of depression in individuals with diabetes to be twice that of nondiabetic individuals\(^9\). Additionally, there is an increased risk of developing diabetes in individuals with depression. Individuals with type II diabetes and minor or

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**Figure 1.** Diabetes Prevalence, Adults in Texas and Travis County, BRFSS 2007-2015

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8RFSS Sampling methods changed in 2011. Prevalence estimates for 2011 and after should not be compared to estimates prior to 2011.

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major depression also have a higher mortality rate than a person with only diabetes. Depression can affect diabetes management through poorer diet, low levels of physical activity, poor glycemic control and difficulty with daily tasks.

### Diabetes Management & Education
Diabetes management may include pharmacotherapy, self-care behaviors, modifications to diet and exercise, as well as visits to primary care physicians and specialists. The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) also monitors the self-management behaviors of individuals who report a diabetes diagnosis. Among Travis County adults with diabetes, 64 percent report checking their blood glucose levels daily, 80.3 percent have had an HbA1c test in the past year, 54.3 percent report checking their feet daily for sores and 46 percent have taken a class on how to manage diabetes. These numbers indicate improvement in diabetes self-management and medical care is still needed.

Diabetes management education and patient-centered participatory care models have been found to be effective in increasing knowledge and self-efficacy to manage diabetes as well as in improving self-care behaviors, leading to long-term blood glucose level control. Austin Public Health offers free 6-week Diabetes Education & Empowerment Program (DEEP) classes at no cost at community locations throughout the Austin/Travis County area. Information regarding DEEP classes as well as other diabetes self-management education resources in the community can be found at: http://bit.ly/2mWcKL1

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2. Note: In 2013, there was no oversample of the Travis County population for the BRFSS. This resulted in a smaller sample size and may limit comparability of prevalence estimates with 2011, 2012, 2014, and 2015.
5. Note: Population estimates from DSHS for 2011 and after classifying individuals who are Hispanic and any other race(s) as Hispanic. Mortality counts are reported for single-race Whites, single-race African-Americans, single-race Asians, and for individuals of any race(s) identifying as Hispanic.
Welcome New Friends of the Society

With the commitment and support of the Friends of the Society program, the Travis County Medical Society is able to bring its members numerous educational, networking and social opportunities. TCMS is pleased to announce the recent additions of Pauley Financial and Wilson Goldrick realtor, Julia Schlitt to the Friends program.

Specializing in financial planning for physicians, Pauley Financial assists with personal financial planning as well as mitigating the concentration risk that most have in respective practices and hospital groups. From building retirement accounts, tax planning, estate planning, investments and insurance optimization—Pauley Financial can assist you from residency to retirement.

For more information, contact Mandi Moynihan at 830-832-3081 or visit www.pauleyfinancial.com.

Realtor Julia Schlitt combines her skills as a realtor with knowledge of Travis County’s medical community. She has been part of the Travis County Medical Alliance for the past 10 years and has assisted many physicians with residential buying, selling and relocation.

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For more information, contact Julia Schlitt at 512-328-0022 or visit www.wilsongoldrick.com.

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The Travis County Medical Alliance has filled the past few months with numerous volunteer opportunities. The Kids Care Club conducted a toy drive and decorated Valentine's cards benefitting Austin Children's Shelter. These children are developing true hearts for service. Many of our membership also decorated and set up an apartment for a family benefitting from Saint Louise House, whose mission is to empower women with children to overcome homelessness in Central Texas. The annual TCMA Fund Drive has over 50 major donors that make TCMAs good works possible. Thank you to each and every donor.

The TCMA membership was honored to welcome TMA’s Division of Advocacy VP Darren Whitehurst to the January general meeting held at the Austonian. Attendees were informed of the vital issues that are impacting medicine during the current legislative session. In that regard, numerous Alliance members participated in the first First Tuesday on February 7.

To attend future First Tuesdays, visit www.texmed.org/firsttuesdays.

**Member Spotlight: Janet Schneider**

Janet is currently the VP of Programs for the Travis County Medical Alliance. She loves the opportunities the TCMA provides for philanthropic work and making lasting friendships. Growing up, her family moved around to many different states. She was born in New Jersey, moved to Michigan, then Baton Rouge and finally settled in Houston. Janet moved from Houston to attend Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State). She graduated with a BA in Mass Communications/Advertising. Advertising apparently wasn't going to be the direction she was headed, as she went directly into sales after college. Janet worked in the cellular phone industry for eight years, moved on to First American Title in business sales and then went into the assisted living and skilled nursing industry. She met her husband Adam Schneider seven years ago. Adam is in internal medicine and has been with Capital Medical Clinic for 20 years. They have four children between them: Preston (19), Kathryn (19), Kendal (15) and Alexandra (14). Janet spends most of her free time working out, reading, volunteering with CASA, working part-time at Baby Gap and raising her wonderful family. She is excited to be on the TCMA Board again this year and is looking forward to the opportunity to serve our community.
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