



# CANS

## NEWSLETTER

January 2008

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS, INC.

Volume 35 Number 1

### President's Message

*Moustapha Abou-Samra, M.D., F.I.C.S., F.A.C.S.*

It is an honor for me to serve as your president; I look forward to working with you to improve the socio-economic fate of California Neurosurgeons.

I feel very humbled to follow in the footsteps of our past president **Pat Wade** who did an admirable job leading us in a more determined direction to serve our members, as well as all the distinguished presidents before him. I hope that I won't disappoint you.

I am looking forward to working closely with members of your board as well as our consultants, a very capable and dedicated group; I know that I won't be able to do the work alone. I also look forward to working with Janine Tash, our executive secretary whose hard work was rewarded by a fantastic meeting, I am sure that those of you who attended will agree with me.



*photo by Dr. John Bonner*

**Dr. Wade (left) and Dr. Abou-Samra**

The Annual meeting just concluded at the Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa was a great success: everyone in attendance enjoyed themselves and also learned about the status of health care legislation in the California Senate and Assembly; it was very refreshing to meet and visit with **Senator Alex Padilla** and **Assemblyman Hector De La Torre**. They are young, energetic and honest legislators that support medicine, health care and physicians, and they demonstrate why we should support proposition 93 that tweaks the term limits laws as they stand, all the while reaffirming the commitment to the concept of term limits.

We were also treated to an eye opening report by **Bill Caton**, our president elect. Bill undertook a painstakingly thorough study about ER reimbursement, a study that will be of extreme interest to our members in

particular and to California Neurosurgeons in general.

As we start this year, the board decided that in order to be fiscally responsible we must raise the annual dues by a very modest \$ 50. We feel that this will help prevent operating in the red, and is fiscally responsible. Such a raise does not replace, however, the need to recruit new and young blood. This objective cannot be accomplished without your help!

Before I close, I invite you to attend our next Annual Meeting at Quail Lodge, Carmel. It will be a great meeting. The venue is beautiful and we are planning an exciting program. Saturday night dinner will be at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, a special treat indeed. What's more? The room rates are amazingly cheap: only \$160 a night! Please put the dates on your calendars-January 16-19, 2009-and plan to attend.

If you have any issues or concerns that you would like to discuss with me, or that you would like me to bring to the board's attention please contact me directly by e-mail: [mabousamra@aol.com](mailto:mabousamra@aol.com), or call me on my cell phone: 805-701-7007.

I hope that 2008 will be a healthy, happy and productive year for each of you. ❖

### Inside this issue:

- Stipends for ER Coverage - page 2**
- CANS Board Meeting- page 2**
- Executive Office Report - page 3**
- 2008 Board of Directors - page 3**
- Annual Meeting - page 4**
- Neural Tube Defects Down - page 5**
- Medical Device Consultants at Risk - page 5**
- Medicare Workshops - page 5**
- Stanford Training Program - page 5**
- Neurosurgical Positions - page 6**
- Exhibitors - page 7-10**
- Newsletter Ads - page 10**

## Stipends for ED/Trauma coverage in California

*Randall W. Smith, M.D., Editor*

Perhaps the most pertinent presentation at the just concluded CANS meeting in Anaheim was that of Bill Caton who reported on his year long research into what hospitals are paying for neurosurgical ED coverage. Such stipend information is completely unavailable in any other database since the hospitals are disinterested in disclosing what they pay for proprietary reasons. Dr. Caton engaged a health research specialist to see if that person could come up with corroborative numbers but said research specialist could find out zip because no hospital would talk to him. Bill was able to get this information because he could contact his many colleagues throughout the state. Docs will talk pretty frankly to other docs so Bill's information can be considered quite accurate. He presented his analysis by 3 regions—Northern, Central and Southern CA—referring to hospitals only in the aggregate and by letters so as not to reveal any hospital's name or exact stipend amount. The data does suffer a bit from apples and oranges problems such as whether coverage occurs at a trauma center, how busy the ED is and what ancillary help is provided (PAs, NPs, etc.). Given those problems, the data should very quite helpful to any CANS member in negotiating a fair market value for his/her services. The details of Bill's regional analysis are available to dues paying CANS members of record for 2007 by contacting our Executive Secretary, Janine Tash, by phone, fax or E-mail (see her listings on page 3). She won't be able to respond unless the address (fax, snail or E-mail) of the requesting person conforms to the member information on file. Neurosurgeons who are not members of CANS but who have submitted an application for membership and a dues check for 2008 will be able to receive the information. ❖

## CANS Board Meeting

*Randall W. Smith, M.D., Editor*

Although reports of Board meetings barely beat out reading the phone book for entertainment or information, the nuts and bolts of where the organization is now and where it's going is dealt with in these meetings. Highlights of the 1/18/08 meeting:

1. CANS had 10 neurosurgeons join in 2007 while losing 5, 3 due to death (Charles Carton, Harold Murphree, Roger Smith). Welcome to Shirley I. Stiver, M.D. from San Francisco as latest new member
2. Expenses for 2007 outpaced income by almost 15K predominantly due to failure of a goodly number of members to pay their 2007 dues and a 5K loss on the 2007 annual meeting. The board recognized the untenability of continuing business as usual in the face of this information and chose to increase dues by \$50 to \$350/year, reduce board member reimbursement for meeting attendance, increase the annual meeting exhibitor charge and attempt to sell advertising space in the monthly newsletter
3. It was noted that as of April 2008, Lawrence Shuer from Stanford will begin his three year tour as the Southwest Regional Director on the AANS Board of Directors
4. Don Prolo reported that pursuit of changes in the law to allow physicians to collectively bargain for their services is now the official policy of the AMA in large part due to intense activity by the CMA and the CMA neurosurgical representatives
5. Phil Lippe reported that a number of state medical specialty societies are exploring creation of a Medical Specialty Council to interact more aggressively with the CMA
6. The Board approved another \$1500 contribution to CAPP, the organization that monitors and fights any attempts to alter the California MICRA law. ❖

# CANS

**An important investment in the future of neurosurgery in California**

## Executive Office Report

*Janine Tash, Executive Secretary*

### JOIN NOW

Membership forms for the California Association of Neurological Surgeons are available by logging on to the CANS website ([www.cans1.org](http://www.cans1.org)) and clicking on the Membership section. Here you will find the application form as well as the brochure which outlines what CANS does for its members.

### OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

5380 Elvas Avenue, Suite 216, Sacramento, CA 95819  
tel 916 457-2267 or fax 916 457-8202 or [janinetash@sbcglobal.net](mailto:janinetash@sbcglobal.net)

### ANNUAL MEETING EXHIBITORS

I would like to personally acknowledge the support of our exhibitors, many of whom attend the CANS Annual Meetings each year. We have dedicated space in this newsletter to list each vendor along with a brief description of product/service and a link to their respective websites (see pages 6-9).

### 2008 BOARD of DIRECTORS

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#### Consultants:

John A. Kusske, M.D., Philipp M. Lippe, M.D., Donald J. Prolo, M.D.,  
J. Ronald Rich, M.D., Lawrence M. Shuer, M.D., Randall W. Smith, M.D.



## CANS ANNUAL MEETING

*Randall W. Smith, M.D.*

The annual meeting held at Disney's Grand Californian Hotel on Saturday, January 19<sup>th</sup> was attended by 51 docs who enjoyed a stimulating day from start to finish. Most refreshing were the addresses by freshman California State Senator **Alex Padilla** and 3 year Assembly Member **Hector De La Torre**, both representing areas of Los Angeles. Both were knowledgeable about California health care issues as they play in the political arena in Sacramento. Padilla was not at all sure the Senate could muster the 21 votes needed to pass the governor's healthcare plan and De La Torre flatly predicted it would fail to pass the Senate, particularly in light of its 14 billion dollar cost when the state is facing a 14 billion dollar deficit. Both commented about the learning curve necessary upon achieving elected state office (Padilla didn't know what balance billing meant, honestly admitted it and vowed to rectify that) and both were in favor of Prop. 93 which would allow them to stay in their respective houses for 12 years. This reporter was struck by their youth and candor and encouraged that California has such people interested enough in the future of California to run the political gauntlet.

**Bob Harbaugh, M.D.** from Pennsylvania reported on his extensive experience with quality assessment issues. He recently chaired the Quality Initiative Workgroup of the AANS/CNS Washington Committee which studied the Federal Pay for Performance offering by CMS and Medicare. His take on the issue: Don't bother.

A presentation by pollster **Stephen Kinney** was marginally informative probably stemming from lack of a real theme and an organized approach. Punch line: More and more Californians are eschewing the Republican or Democratic parties and listing themselves as undecided or independents and whichever way that group goes will decide elections. This was probably not news to the audience.

The afternoon session, in which each of the 10 California residency training programs made a presentation about their facilities and faculty, resident number and research interests, was extremely interesting. One was struck by the mostly well organized presentations and the candor of the presenters, all of whom save three were the department/division chairs. A common theme was the 80 hour resident work week and the stress that places upon covering the bases and trainee exposure to adequate material. Most programs with sufficient clinical material are trying to add a resident position to deal with the perceived shortage of neurosurgeons in the state and nation. Of note was that about half of the graduating residents leave California and the percentage of women in the residencies is ever on the rise. An intriguing discussion was held regarding the duration of female neurosurgeons remaining in practice over the years. No statistics were known to exist regarding women neurosurgeons but apparently women Ob-Gyn specialists 10 years after completing training have 60% working full time, 25% working part-time and 15% no longer practicing. Male neurosurgeon statistics were not readily known but it was felt likely that more than 95% were in active practice at the 10 year point. Just how women neurosurgeons behave, particularly considering the difficulty of actually achieving a part-time neurosurgical practice, could seriously impact workforce issues in the future.

The evening banquet was marked by good food, an excellent sleight-of hand magician and highlighted by the presentation of the Pevehouse Award for Distinguished Service to the Neurosurgical Community to **Marty Weiss, M.D.**, whose acceptance speech included a very politic recognition of the spouses who have supported their neurosurgeons' careers. ❖

## Other News from the Editor

*Randall W. Smith, M.D.*

### Neural Tube Defects Down

Fed bashing is a popular pastime even at times practiced by this newsletter. Of note is the reduction of babies born with spina bifida to 18/100,000 births in 2005 down from 24.9 in 1991. The reduction is felt to be due to educational efforts regarding folic acid intake by the U.S. Public Health Service and the FDA. In this instance, the Feds seem to have gotten it right. ❖

### Medical Device Consultants at Risk

A recent guilty plea by Arkansas neurosurgeon Patrick Chan, charged with taking kickbacks from Massachusetts-based Blackstone Medical and other companies for using their spinal-implant devices, could be a heads up for those of you acting as consultants for various companies. Dr. Chan apparently stopped using Medtronic implants and switched to Blackstone products after signing a \$25,000 consulting agreement with Blackstone. Of course, what constitutes consulting can be a bit nebulous and what Dr. Chan did or didn't do for the 25K is not publicized, but what this case exemplifies is that if you are receiving consultant fees from a device company, you better damn well do some consulting. As you know, the Feds, who prosecuted Dr. Chan, have more attorneys than you do. ❖

### Medicare Workshops Worthwhile

Dr. Phil Lippe, consultant to CANS in the grandfather and up category, swears up and down that the NHIC half-day Medicare Workshops are worth your or an office employee's time to attend. The price is good (free) and there should be a workshop scheduled to take place near you. Information at [www.medicarenhic.com/cal\\_prov/seminars.shtml](http://www.medicarenhic.com/cal_prov/seminars.shtml). ❖

## Stanford University Neurosurgery Training Program

*Randall W. Smith, M.D.*

*(Each month we plan to feature one of the California Neurosurgery residency programs. It is hoped these program highlights will acquaint our readers with our colleagues, how they are running their programs, their interests and some of their clinical research projects to which you might want to refer a patient. The programs will be presented in an order totally at the whim of the editor. This month: Stanford. –Ed.)*

Stanford University's training program is under the aegis of the Department of Neurosurgery chaired by Gary Steinberg (*we will forego graduate titles in our text*). They graduate two residents a year and are applying for a third slot since they have the faculty and material to justify another position. A third resident will help coverage issues created by the mandated 80 hour work week although they have been granted an extension to 88 hours by the ACGME. The training program runs 7 years including internship with 2 years set aside for electives and research. They estimate that about half of their graduates leave California and of the half who stays, a good majority goes into academic practice.

The Department is wrestling with EMTALA issues as they receive many referrals from often distant hospitals purported to have no neurosurgical coverage which keeps their bed census very high, often overloads their ICU and can cause cancellation of elective cases for lack of beds. They support one of the eight dedicated children's hospitals in California (Packard Hospital). Sharing the campus with undergraduate schools provides opportunities for close collaboration with basic science programs and research for the faculty and residents.

Although their clinical interests are varied and well supported, radiosurgical treatments are particularly strong and innovative, in part due to the Cyberknife which was developed at Stanford by John Adler. The latter is working on

using radiosurgery to treat atrial fibrillation in a much simpler fashion than the existing transvascular node and conduction fiber ablation techniques.

In the near future, building plans include a new on-campus hospital, new pediatric operating rooms and intraoperative CT and MRI.

Four clinical research protocols (with contact persons) that are accepting patients are:

1: DIAM Spinal Stabilization vs. Decompression. This is a randomized prospective study accepting patients with neurogenic claudication with spinal stenosis on MRI or CT. The aim of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the DIAM, a new interspinous spacer device, for its effectiveness in treating this condition vs. more traditional surgical decompression. Contact physicians for this study include Stephen Ryu, Lawrence Shuer and Jon Park. The contact nurse coordinator for this study is Irina Belencaya and she can be reached at 650-724-0191.

2: Cerecyte and MAPS Trials for the Treatment of Intracranial Aneurysms. These two randomized prospective trials are looking at the efficacy of bioactive micocoils vs the standard platinum coils in the neurointerventional treatment of intracranial aneurysms, both ruptured and non ruptured. Contact physicians for these studies would be Gary Steinberg, Stephen Chang or Robert Dodd. The contact nurse coordinator for these studies is Mary Marcellus at 650-723-6767.

3: EGF receptor Vaccine Trial for the Treatment of Malignant Brain Tumors. This study investigates the effectiveness of immunotherapy of patients with gross total resection of glioblastomas that harbor the variant iii mutation of the EGF receptor. The vaccine utilizes the mutant LEAK peptide. Other clinical trials in neuro-oncology address benign tumors that are either unresectable or recurrent with the treatment of recurrent meningiomas with the somatostatin receptor inhibitor, SOM230. Contact physicians for these studies are Lawrence Recht or Griffith Harsh. The contact nurse coordinator is Lynn Adler at 650-736-6320.

4. COSS Study. This randomized study is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of bypass procedures (EC-IC) to reduce the subsequent frequency of ischemic stroke. Contact physicians for this study are Gary Steinberg and Stephen Chang. The contact nurse coordinator is Teresa Bell-Stephens at 650-723-5575.

Stanford's entire faculty is listed below. Their Web site at <http://med.stanford.edu/neurosurgery/> can be perused to obtain faculty addresses and phone numbers should you wish to contact them

Gary K Steinberg, M.D. PhD  
Lawrence M. Shuer, M.D.  
John R. Adler, M.D.  
Griffith R. Harsh IV, M.D.  
Michael S. B. Edwards, M.D.  
Edward R. Laws, M.D.  
Stephen L. Huhn, M.D.  
Lawrence Katznelson, M.D.  
Victor Tse, M.D. PhD  
Steven D. Chang, M.D.

Jaimie M. Henderson, M.D.  
Stephen L. Skirball, M.D.  
Jon Park, M.D.  
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Roland A Torres, M.D.  
Paul Jackson, M.D., PhD  
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Judith Murovic, M.D.  
Pak H. Chan, PhD  
Albert J. Wong, M.D.  
Theo D. Palmer, PhD  
Heng Zhao, PhD  
Robert M. Sapolsky, PhD  
Marion S. Buckwalter, M.D. PhD  
❖

## Neurosurgical Position

*Any CANS member who is looking for a new associate/partner/PA/NP or who is looking for a position (all California neurosurgery residents are CANS members and get this newsletter) is free to submit a 150 word summary of a position available or of one's qualifications for a one time posting in this newsletter. Submit your text to me by E-mail ([rws-avopro@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rws-avopro@sbcglobal.net)) or fax (858 683-2022). ❖*

*The California Association of Neurological Surgeons wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to the exhibitors who supported and participated in the 2008 Annual Meeting in Anaheim... ❖*



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**ATTN Vendors:** Beginning in February, CANS will begin accepting ads for this newsletter. Please contact the executive office for complete price list and details. ❖

Questions or comments can be sent to the editor, Randall W. Smith, M.D., at [rws-avopro@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rws-avopro@sbcglobal.net) or to the CANS office at [janinetash@sbcglobal.net](mailto:janinetash@sbcglobal.net). Past issues of the monthly newsletter are available on the CANS website at [www.cans1.org](http://www.cans1.org). *The newsletter is a mix of fact, rumor and opinion. The facts are hopefully clearly stated. The rest is open to interpretation. The opinion is mine. R.S. The assistance of Janine Tash and Moustapha Abou-Samra, M.D. in the preparation of this newsletter is acknowledged and appreciated. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter in the future, please E-mail or fax Janine Tash [janinetash@sbcglobal.net](mailto:janinetash@sbcglobal.net), (916-457-8202) with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line.*

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