

Wednesday, March 27, 2013

Stepping Outside the Office to Help Patients

Advances in medical delivery systems, corporate dentistry and emergency dentistry/medicine were on my mind as I drove to the state capital in Phoenix on a recent Wednesday morning.

The evolution of our health care system has made headlines over the past year. Each day, we read of proposals and new regulations that will affect health care delivery in this country. The field of dentistry, of which I am a part, has recognized that and moved to the forefront in making sure that the doctor-patient relationship is represented when it comes to state legislation.

On Feb. 13, the Arizona Dental Association had its annual Dental Day at the Capitol. There, dentists try to make a difference for all the patients in Arizona. All volunteers, we were briefed by AzDA executive director Kevin Earle in the Senate caucus room.



Equipped with the latest info and plenty of talking points, I was off to my appointment at the office of my District 11 state representative, Adam Kwasman. My impression is that our elected officials truly want to represent what is best for all of Arizona. Our newest legislator was no different, being receptive to the information I presented. I truly appreciate the opportunity to be a voice for our patients in educating Kwasman about multiple aspects of health care issues.

Next on the agenda was a House Health Committee hearing. It gave me a firsthand opportunity to see what is happening with health care legislation at the state level. Representatives from the Mayo Clinic were there to give an update on innovations statewide. We are fortunate to have not only Mayo's professional expertise, but also its business acumen, an effective and efficient model.

The business of dental health care was up next on the agenda. Arizona is one of the few states that allows non-dentists to own dental practices. With the advent of such practices, the AzDA is strongly advocating legislation to ensure non-dentist-owned practices adhere to the same rules and regulations, with similar disciplinary repercussions, as traditional practices.

Medicine and dentistry came together on the issue of expanding the state's Medicaid program in regard to emergency treatment for dental problems. This is a very complicated issue for which the legislators feel an industry-originated solution may be best. Imagine government, medicine, dentistry and hospitals all working together to try to find a solution to care for the most vulnerable among us. What a wonderful world that would be.

During the drive home, I looked back over the day. Unlike my usual workday, most of it had been spent dealing with business and legal issues that affect the dental profession. My experiences underscored my feeling that the better the health care profession is at understanding business and legislation, the more professional we can remain.

Enjoy the journey,

Bob