



North Coast Physician

In This Issue:

CMA President Message, Join Luh, M.D.....	4
"Joining Forces to Oppose Measure That Would Devastate Healthcare Delivery in California"	
In My Opinion, Stephanie Dittmer, M.D.	5
"Mentorship, Representation and Hope"	
HUM PET Update, Caroline Connor, M.D., MPH.....	6
Public Health Update, Ian Hoffman, M.D., MPH.....	8
"Syphilis Update: Moving from Risk-Based to Routine-Based"	
Consortium for CME Update, Marcelle Mahan, M.D.	9
Public Service and Medical Ethics Cmt, Melissa McKenzie, D.O.	10
Open Forum, "Connections" - Jennifer Heidmann, M.D.....	11
Open Forum, George Ingraham, M.D.....	12
Welcome New Members.....	13
HDN Tattler	14
Coming, Going and Moving Around.....	14
Year Round Resolutions - Testimony Period Open.....	15
Partnership HealthPlan Updates	15
Federal Advocacy Update, Elizabeth McNeil.....	16
"Another Tough Year....But Important Wins for Physicians"	
Have You Experienced Challenges With Behavioral Health Serv.	17
Cal Poly Humboldt - 2022 CIRM Bridges 3.0 Scholars Symposium	17
Guest Submission, "Talking Past Dad", Debbe Hartridge	18
Call for Nominations - Plessner Memorial Award	18
CMA Legislative Advocacy Day, April 19, 2022.....	19
Social Media 101.....	23
MD/DO Emergency Situation Driving Emblem.....	25
CMA Legal: Health Law Library.....	26
*Fraud and Abuse *Fraud and Abuse: Referral Issues	
Continuing Medical Education/Grand Rounds Calendar.....	27
Classified Ads / Bulletin Board	28

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"Hopping Bunny"

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Mentorship, Representation and Hope

Stephanie Dittmer, M.D.



The interconnectedness of physician development across all stages is one of great interest to me. As someone who should have by all accounts never have reached this hallowed space of physician identity, I approach this topic with a messy mix of gratitude, hope, creativity, humility, fear, and trepidation.

Sitting in the UCLA Hospital cafeteria, amongst the smell of the lattes from the espresso cart and the cheeseburger smells from the grill, I would help my younger brother with his homework. We would take breaks by wandering the hallways and find water fountains to ‘explore.’ We loved trying to find the elevator with the fastest drop rate and would try to see how many jumps we could get in and how high we could hang before others interrupted our fun. In one of these moments of wandering, I came across the medical school library.

Like Diagon Alley in *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter™*, it appeared like a magical repository of medical and scientific knowledge. From then on, my 7 year old brother would have to drag me away from the library when he wanted to stretch his legs. There was something amazing about being able to walk back and forth in time across the history of medicine. I loved the simplicity of the past, reveled in the language and diagrams of old. Like a child looking up one word in the dictionary, only then to be prompted to then search for another word, I was mesmerized by the never ending possibility of what next book I could open.

The blending of youthful curiosity with imagination prompted my excitement for medicine. However, it was meeting Dr. Fernando Vinuela that truly started my life’s journey of becoming a physician. His joy and passion in helping others intertwined with the technological advance-

ments of science brought purpose to his work. I am fairly certain that this interventional neuroradiologist did not understand how he was launching a future Family Medicine Physician into the world at age 12.

Representation Matters. Seeing your cultural identity represented is an irrefutable paradigm shift for nurturing hope.

The apprenticeship and mentorship component of our profession is truly sacred. There is nothing that truly replaces the direct inspiration and learning we share. Finding mentors that represent the cultural and sociological needs of the community in which we practice is fundamental to creating a sustainable pipeline of physicians in Humboldt.

Mentors help find community. Mentors share experiences.

And for those of us in marginalized communities, they help us even more so by exposing the inequities with an emphasis on education, self reflection, and empowerment. They serve to facilitate the critical evaluation of the structural flaws in our system. They do so with the empathy of someone who understands your generational trauma. They inspire optimism.

I love the complexity of the human body and its problematic medical conditions. I appreciate the difficulty of changing human behavior to improve health outcomes. I enjoy helping a patient figure out how to navigate the pitfalls of our fragmented healthcare system. I feel renewed when I can share in a family’s experience of bringing a new baby into the world. I relish the moments where an empathic space of healing and connection brings peace, hope, and meaning to our human existence.

I am proud of our medical society’s support to restructure our Bylaws to include the following new committees: Women in Medicine, Ethnic Minority Organized Sec-

tion and Humboldt Del Norte Premedical Education Task force.

The magnitude of these changes represents great potential for thoughtful improvement in our experiences as physician mentors. These committees produce the representation opportunities needed to inspire Humboldt & Del Norte’s children and adolescents.

By establishing these committees, the medical community is formally and structurally acknowledging the importance of intersectionality as it relates to currently practicing physicians as well as future generations of physicians.

Shaping space for Humboldt & Del Norte female physicians and female physicians of color to discuss their personal and professional struggles with unfair contract negotiations, homophobic workplace environments, and ethnic slurs is necessary for the retention of our physicians.

Ideas and plans conceived from these moments often focus on how to not only improve our medical culture but also kindle the next generation of physicians to continue the legacy of betterment.

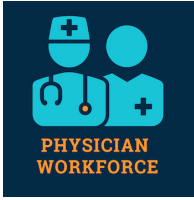
The committee meetings offer mentorship development in the context of education, individual self reflection, and collective growth.

I strongly encourage all physicians to consider attending these committee meetings and journal clubs. The meetings connect us to healthy and sound mechanisms of rearing future physicians. They help us understand the challenges we face as we learn how to foster awareness of traumatic training effects. They help us integrate the knowledge of trauma informed care into physician upbringing.

I look forward to seeing everyone there! §

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contact Medical Society office.*

The Editorial and Publications Committee encourages our member's comments for publication. Please submit electronically prior to the 15th of the month preceding publication. hdncms@sbcglobal.net

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