



The Medical Society of the County of Queens  
112-25 Queens Boulevard, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Forest Hills, NY 11375  
Telephone: 718.268.7300 Fax: 718.268.6918

## **Councilor's Report – April 2021**

### **Society Highlights**

- **Nominating Committee** - The Nominating Committee Members are as follows:

President-elect-David A. Fishman, MD, Committee Chair,  
Joseph Cooke, MD  
Michael Richter, MD  
James Satterfield, MD  
Saulius Skeivys, MD  
Penny Stern, MD, and  
L. Carlos Zapata MD

The Committee met on Thursday, January 28, 2021, to review all nominations for Trustees, Officers, and Delegates to the MSSNY HOD. The 2021-2022 slate of officers was submitted and approved by the Comitia Minora at February's meeting. The ballots containing the names will go out to the membership for a vote—elections from May 3 to May 14, 2021.

- **President's Report** - David Vilabrera, MD - Dr. Vilabrera discussed the concern that newly graduated physicians have difficulty finding teaching hospitals with residencies available. This is due to stress on the system from Covid patients. He expressed these concerns at Lobby Day last week. Dr. Vilabrera was also concerned about the distribution of efforts between Physicians, Residents, Physicians 'Assistants, and Nurse Practitioners. Many agreed with him.

➤ **Bylaws Committee** - The Bylaws Committee Members are as follows:

Carlos Zapata, MD, Chair

Louis Auguste, MD

Arthur Fougner, MD

Lorraine Giordano, MD

Michael Richter, MD

David Vilabrera, MD, President, ex-officio

David Fishman, President-Elect, ex-officio

The Bylaws Committee met via teleconference in February and March 2021. The Committee discussed the current bylaws and proposed amendments to comply with the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic and the essential changes that all organizations have been forced to make, most importantly, those that will affect the Medical Society's future. The Comitia Minora approved the report during April's meeting, and they will be submitted to MSSNY for approval at the next Council Meeting. If accepted, the changes will go to the membership for a vote during the upcoming elections in May 2021.

➤ **Digital Campaign** – Erik Blutinger, MD, and Moira Casey


Dr. Blutinger and Ms. Casey unveiled the new Society Digital Campaign. This new program is needed because of perceived misconceptions/apprehensions surrounding COVID-19 (information and vaccines). The involvement of existing social media platforms will be utilized. Hashtags (#) and posting photos of physicians and others receiving their vaccines are among the first initiatives. In the future, emphasis must be placed on Primary Physicians encouraging their patients in person and distributing to a broader population once vaccines are more readily available. Please follow them on Twitter or view all the candid photos at

<https://www.mscq.org/sys/website/?pageId=1076297>

➤ **The Bulletin** – Copy of all previous newsletters is accessible at

<https://www.mscq.org/The-Bulletin>. The Society is currently accepting materials for their summer of 2021. Please e-mail [QMS@QueensMedicalSociety.org](mailto:QMS@QueensMedicalSociety.org) by 5.15.2021.

- **News Release - Hospital Closing** - There was discussion afoot to close or downsize St. John's Episcopal Hospital in Far Rockaway. The Comitia Minora decided to engage in a letter campaign to the County and State legislative officials. Dr. Auguste, BOT Chair, drafted the following:



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Monday, April 5, 2021

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo  
 Governor of the State of New York

Dr. Howard A. Zucker, MD, JD  
 Commissioner of Health of New York State

Dear Sirs:

The Medical Society of the County of Queens wishes to express its concern regarding the proposal of closure of St John Episcopal Hospital. The policy of closing hospitals over the past decades in order to eliminate or reduce the state budget gap has been no less than disastrous. Queens County alone has lost at least 10 hospitals, leaving the county with the lowest ratio of hospital beds per population. Indeed, Queens County has less than 1.5 hospital beds per 1000 population, while Manhattan has six per 1000 population. This lack of bed capacity was acutely felt during the initial surge of the COVID pandemic in New York City when people died not only because of the virulence of the infection but because the already depleted hospital resources were simply overwhelmed and could not provide adequate care to so many patients. It is with a certain trepidation that we would like to remind you that this worldwide pandemic is far from being brought under control and that we are still living with the fear in New York city that another spike of COVID infections may be looming in the not-too-distant future.

In addition, St John Episcopal Hospital is the only acute care facility for the entire Rockaway peninsula population, amounting to nearly 120,000. This population with an average income significantly lower than that of the rest of the county can ill afford extra transportation cost to cross over to other boroughs for their medical care and could lose timely access to care in case of emergency. A micro-hospital of 15 beds may feature well in the accounting books but could not possibly meet the needs of that community.

Finally, the Medical Society of the County of Queens would like to express its opinion that the policy of shuttering hospitals to balance the state budget has not been an effective solution or anything close to what it was expected to accomplish. Health Insurance companies have seen their profits continue to soar, while the process of hospital mergers has largely contributed to the steady rise in health care costs to individuals. This solution proposed in 2007 may have seemed promising, but in reality, it has not delivered the expected outcome. The Medical Society of the County of Queens wishes to amplify the cries of despair of the poor, the underrepresented, and the voiceless of our county and speak strongly against the closure of St John Episcopal Hospital. We urge you, Governor and the New York State Health Commissioner, to pursue other more humane options to rein in the cost of health care in the state, perhaps by capping the profits of the Insurance companies, the pharmaceutical industry, and the medical device manufacturers. The poor communities may seem to be the low-hanging fruits, but should they be...

Sincerely,

***Louis J. Auguste*** MD, MPH, FACS, FSSO  
 Chair Board of Trustees of the MSCQ

***David Vilabrera*** MD  
 President/MSCQ

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