



WESTCHESTER PHYSICIAN

January/February 2026

Volume 42, Issue 1



PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Anaïs Carniciu, MD

Dear Colleagues,

As we enter the new year, I want to thank you for the work you do every day on behalf of your patients and our community. Practicing medicine in Westchester County is both a privilege and a challenge, and the past year has reinforced how much our patients rely on us not only for care, but for guidance, reassurance, and leadership.

Health care in New York continues to be shaped by policy decisions made in Albany and Washington, advances in science, and a public environment that can at times be polarized and uncertain. Physicians must remain one of the most trusted voices in our communities, and that trust is something we need to protect and strengthen.

Several developments at the state level are directly affecting how we practice medicine:

1. **Public Health Funding and Program Expansion:**
New York State has committed additional funding toward preventive care, chronic disease management, and population health initiatives, including programs focused on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and respiratory illness. While these investments are welcome, it is critical that implementation reflects the realities of clinical practice. Our goal is to advocate for programs that support, rather than complicate, patient care.
2. **Workforce Shortages and Administrative Burden:**
Across Westchester, we continue to see shortages in primary care, behavioral health, and hospital-based specialties. Many practices are struggling to recruit and retain staff while managing increasing documentation requirements and prior authorization demands. These pressures contribute to burnout and limit patient access. Our Society remains actively engaged in advocacy efforts aimed at reducing unnecessary administrative burden and prior authorization requirements
3. **Vaccines and Public Confidence:**
New York maintains strong immunization requirements, which

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ANAÏS CARNICIU, MD
President, WCMS

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FROM THE EDITOR...***DRUNK WITH LOVE*****PETER ACKER, MD**

Several years ago I published in these pages a column with the somewhat jocular title of “It’s Supplementary, My Dear Watson. In was inspired by a full page ad in the journal news for a “revolutionary” supplement which was purported to enhance memory. Part of the ad featured a picture of a very professorial looking gentleman in a lab coat who gave a full throated endorsement of this product, including that it was FDA approved. I decided to investigate and found that the product in question had been indeed been before the FDA. Their conclusion: probably safe, possibly efficacious.

I was reminded of this column this morning when I attended a fascinating CPC at Maria Farrari Children’s Hospital. It featured a case of a four year old girl who was brought to their emergency room with a two day history of waddling gait and walking into walls. She had been seen by a doctor a few days before and diagnosed with a urinary tract infection. Antibiotics were prescribed. It came out later that the mother had also consulted a naturopath and decided after two days of antibiotics, to stop them and increase the amount of supplements that she had already been giving her over the past year. It was a day or so later that she became symptomatic. An extensive workup was instituted which included an MRI. To everyone’s astonishment, the MRI showed signs consistent with Wernike Encephlopathy. The mother was asked to bring in all the supplements and it turned out that many of them had significant amounts of ethanol. Parental thiamine was administered and within 24 hours she showed dramatic improvement.

The supplement industry is huge and unfortunately it is not very well regulated. With the advent of the internet with “Dr. Google” and the strong strains of anti-science rhetoric which have emerged over the past decades has resulted in scores of well-meaning parents diving into the rabbit holes of anti-vaccination and alternative medicine. It behooves all of us as practitioners to counsel our patients in clear unambiguous terms about the possible dangers of unregulated products.

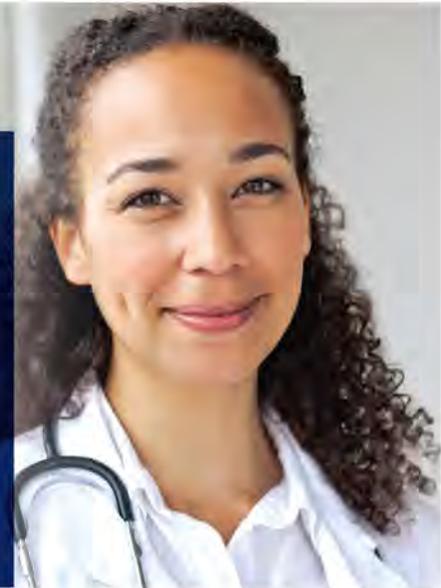
This was indeed a cautionary tale. Despite that, it was hard not get totally fascinated with cases like this and it caused me to think of past experiences I have had. For example, I took care of a toddler who presented to the ER at Bellevue in coma. A blood sugar was found to be extremely low and as quick infusion of dextrose was like rousing Lazarus from the dead. It turned out that he had wandered into the bathroom and was attracted to the brightly colored bottle of mouth wash which resulted in alcohol induced hypoglycemia. Then there was the time that an 8 year old boy with an acute dystonic reaction. IV Benadryl was administered that reversed the reaction and afterwards we questioned the parents on medications expecting to hear that he had somehow gotten an antipsychotic. To our surprise, the parents knew of no such medications in

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FULL-SERVICE, ONE FOCUS: HEALTH CARE

STOP THE TRAIN**Elliot Barsh, MD***(Links to articles mentioned are found in the body of this piece)*

“And you cannot play if you do not...listen” -
El Maestro speaking to his young guitar student
Frankie Presto (the magic strings of Frankie Presto)

Hi everyone.

Welcome back.

I hope you are staying warm.

As doctors, we learn to listen for *content*.We “*take*” a history and figure out how to treat an illness.

Treatments can fail.

Listening is so much more!

It is not just the words we speak.

It is our *tone, rhythm, pauses, breath,*
and *emphasis*.True, intentional, listening *aligns* us.It will increase *trust*, anchor *attention*, and reduce *anxiety*.We begin to feel *safe, believed, and cared* for.

Whether they know it or not, our patients have much to tell us.

Our listening gives them *permission* to say it.There is *fear* beneath anger, *grief* beneath symptoms, and *meaning* beneath complaints.

They may say they want to know what they have, but they really want to know...

... what it means for their life?

...if they are more than their illness?

...if they still matter?

...is their suffering seen?

...are they alone?

For us, the doctors, listening *reduces moral injury, restores meaning, reconnects us to our purpose,*
and *reminds us that what we do is not just about outcomes.*

Listening strengthens us.

It uplifts us.

It is not as exciting as a life saving procedure.

It is a private moment where we accept responsibility for someone else.

Listening never fails!

Thanks for reading.

See you next month.

Be safe and warm.

E

“Did you want to die?” the resident asked. “Not really. I just wanted to live different.”

LVAD

“The more we choose to listen, the more we will be able to carry.”

The Things We Carry

“Can we be our best while our patients are doing the best they can?”

My Patient Was Dying. His Wife Refused to Accept It.

How doctors can better navigate difficult patients and families.

“All we have to do is listen.

My Mother’s Last, Best Gift Was an Astonishing Secret

It took my mother getting Alzheimer’s for my siblings and me to learn the truth about our family and childhood.

“Our patients are the fire that changes us.”

Fire In the Earth by David Whyte

And we know, when Moses was told, in the way he was told, "Take off your shoes!" He grew pale from that simple reminder of fire in the dusty earth. He never recovered his complicated way of loving again and was free to love in the same way he felt the fire licking at his heels loved him. As if the lion earth could roar and take him in one movement. Every step he took from there was carefully placed. Everything he said mattered as if he knew the constant witness of the ground and remembered his own face

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Anaïs Carniciu, MD

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have helped protect our communities from outbreaks of vaccine-preventable disease. At the same time, many of us are spending more time addressing vaccine hesitancy and misinformation in the exam room. These conversations are not always easy, but they are essential. Patients continue to look to their physicians for clear, evidence-based guidance, and your calm, thoughtful counsel makes a real difference.

National debates and federal policy decisions also have direct implications for our work:

1. **Vaccination Guidance and Preventive Care:** Updates to federal recommendations for COVID-19, influenza, and RSV vaccination continue to evolve, particularly for older adults, children, and patients with chronic illness. Ensuring that patients understand who should be vaccinated, when, and why remains a core part of preventive care. WCMS will continue to advocate for science and public health initiatives that emphasize the importance of vaccinations.
2. **Behavioral Health Access:** Demand for mental health services continues to exceed capacity, including here in Westchester County. While telehealth has expanded access, reimbursement and workforce limitations persist. Integrating behavioral health into primary care settings and supporting parity in coverage remain important priorities for physicians and patients alike.
3. **Health Equity and Community Needs:** Disparities in health outcomes remain evident across our region. While public perception of Westchester is often associated with affluence, the reality is that parts of our county are underserved. Access to care, language barriers, housing instability, and food insecurity continue to affect patient health. Physicians are often the first to see the impact of these challenges, and your role in identifying needs and connecting patients with resources is critical.

The issues facing health care today are complex and truly frustrating. Yet what remains constant is the

professionalism, dedication, and integrity of Westchester's physicians. By staying engaged, informed, and united, we can continue to advocate effectively for our patients, our profession, and the future of medicine in New York.

Thank you for your continued commitment to caring for our community and for supporting the Westchester County Medical Society.

Sincerely,
Anaïs Carniciu, MD

**STOP THE TRAIN**
Elliot Barsh, MD*(Links to articles mentioned are found in the body of this piece)**(Continued from page 5)*

in the dust the moment before revelation. Since then thousands have felt the same immobile tongue with which he tried to speak. Like the moment you too saw, for the first time, your own house turned to ashes. Everything consumed so the road could open again. Your entire presence in your eyes and the world turning slowly into a single branch of flame.



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MSSNY'S
PHYSICIAN
ADVOCACY
DAY

TUESDAY MARCH 10th, 2026

Meeting Room 6

The Empire State Plaza

Albany, NY 12242

7:45AM-11AM

 [**CLICK HERE TO REGISTER**](#) 

Join your colleagues from all around New York State to speak with your legislators and communicate the right health policy solutions for you and your patients!

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- Protecting IDR appeal mechanisms to ensure fair payments
- Promoting comprehensive medical liability reform and preserving Excess Insurance coverage
- Addressing public health threats
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For More Information Contact:

Nicholas Hospodar

nhospodar@mssny.org

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THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF
THE STATE OF NEW YORK
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Make the most of your membership

*FROM THE EDITOR...**DRUNK WITH LOVE*

PETER ACKER, MD

(Continued from page 2)

there house hold. They were, however, giving him a medicine a medicine to soften his ear wax. We were bit aware if any oral medicines for ear wax, so we had the parents go home and bring it to us. It turned out that it was a prescription for an antipsychotic which was intended for another patient with the same last name! I could only wonder how the intended patient was doing trying to treat his psychosis with ear drops.



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SAYING “GOODBYE” TO 2025, AND “HELLO” TO 2026

The conclusion of 2025 allowed us to reflect upon and acknowledge the numerous accomplishments achieved by our Society and Academy. Significant strides were made in advocating for our legislative goals, a testament to our dedicated efforts and strategic foresight. Concurrently, our engagement with the broader community proved instrumental in fostering professional camaraderie, advancing continuing education initiatives, disseminating crucial public health information, and introducing a host of beneficial services for our valued membership. These multifaceted endeavors collectively contributed to a year of significant progress and solidified our commitment to both professional excellence and community engagement.

This year, our organization continued its member

engagement through a series of programs, both in-person and virtual, culminating in a new forum for direct dialogue. Throughout the year, we were pleased to host numerous in-person gatherings along with several virtual evening educational meetings, providing diverse opportunities for connection and learning. A key highlight was the introduction of our inaugural Town Hall event, designed to foster open discussion with all members, a format we intend to continue in the future. We extend our appreciation to every member who participated in these initiatives, whether attending our Annual Meeting, Lobby Day in Albany, the House of Delegates meeting, our student wine tasting, or any of the various events held throughout 2025. Your active involvement is vital to the success of these efforts, and we want to encourage your continued participation and the invitation of your colleagues to join our physician community.

Our biggest win together recently was knocking out the Wrongful Death Bill for the fourth time! We want to thank all our members who stepped up – whether it was making those important phone calls, sending out countless emails, or even trekking all the way to Albany to make our presence felt against this potentially disastrous bill. Your dedication truly paid off, and because of everyone's hard work, our collective voice was heard loud and clear, showing what we can achieve when we unite, and we hope we can count on your continued support for future issues affecting physicians across the state.

The Academy of Medicine has recently engaged in a series of initiatives underscoring its commitment to nurturing future medical talent and supporting ongoing professional development within the physician community. We proudly continued our tradition of sponsoring scholarships for the WESEF “Future of Medicine” winners, recognizing these promising young students at our annual meeting for their remarkable interest in the medical field. Furthermore, our commitment to professional development remains strong as we consistently accredit Continuing Medical Education (CME) programs for our local partners, hospitals, and fellow societies, ensuring that these institutions are able to provide essential educational resources. Additionally, we were delighted to host over 50 students from our NYMC student section at our annual wine tasting

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SAYING “GOODBYE” TO 2025, AND “HELLO” TO 2026

(Continued from page 8)

event, an evening characterized by engaging discourse between physicians and students, complemented by an educational exploration of the wine-making process. These diverse activities collectively highlight the Academy's dedication to fostering a vibrant medical community through education, mentorship, and collaboration.

As we advance into 2026, our organization hopes for sustained and increased engagement from our members in all future events, virtual meetings, and educational seminars. It is the active participation of our members that serves as the primary impetus for generating ideas, thereby enhancing the overall membership experience, fostering deeper collective engagement, and, most crucially, elevating awareness on the significant topics pertinent to all physicians. The vitality and progress of our organization are directly linked to the dedicated involvement of each member.

Our organization remains committed to an ongoing collaborative partnership with the Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY). This alliance is instrumental in our strategic efforts to disseminate crucial information and updates to our members, ensuring they are consistently well-informed regarding pertinent developments and resources. Furthermore, this productive cooperation is pivotal in our continuous endeavor to evaluate and enhance the comprehensive benefits available to our membership, to ensure maximum value and support. Through this dedicated collaboration, we aim to consistently elevate the member experience by providing timely communication and continually improving the tangible advantages of belonging to our societies.

We extend gratitude to our leadership for their dedication, tireless energy, and invaluable commitment of time. Your consistent support and guidance have been instrumental in navigating challenges and creating opportunities, directly enabling every success we have collectively achieved. It is through your efforts and belief in your profession that the very foundation for our accomplishments is laid and sustained. Without your contri-

butions and leadership, the milestones we have reached would not have been possible.



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save the date

WCMS/WAM Annual Meeting
Tuesday, June 23, 2026

JUNE		
MON	TUES	WED
22	<div style="border: 2px solid blue; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <p>23 <i>Annual Meeting</i></p> </div>	24

Westchester Country Club
99 Biltmore Avenue
Rye, NY
6:00pm - 9:00pm
Details to follow



MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
155 Washington Avenue, Suite 207
Albany, NY 12210
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January 27, 2026

Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker, New York State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 349
Albany, New York 12248

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader, New York State Senate
State Capitol, Room 332
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Speaker Heastie and Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins:

Our organizations collectively are writing to you to express our strong opposition to a proposal contained in Part X of the Executive Budget Public Protection and General Government bill (A.10005/S.9005) that would eliminate the historical review role that county medical societies have played in recommending physicians to participate in New York's Workers' Compensation program. We thank the New York State Assembly and New York State Senate for not including this proposal in your recently adopted respective "one-House" Budget proposals and urge that you continue to work to ensure that this proposal remains out of the final adopted Budget.

We very much appreciate the goal of this measure to ease the burdens associated with participation in the Workers' Compensation program. However, this proposal does not address the fundamental challenges that have resulted in limited physician participation in this program. The reason why physicians have been reluctant to participate is the challenging process for obtaining approvals for patient care as well as the significant challenges in navigating the burdensome, often controverted, process to be fairly paid after services have been delivered to injured workers. It can take months or even years to receive payment for care that was appropriately delivered to injured workers.

Even more frustrating is that a Board decision setting forth a carrier's responsibility for making payment does not necessarily mean that payment will actually be made to the physician providing care. Certain payors, particularly municipal entity payors, regularly fail to make payments that have been deemed to be due to physicians, as a result of the lack of a meaningful enforcement mechanism.

Furthermore, our county medical societies provide an important review function in ensuring qualified physicians are participating in this essential program. The No-Fault Insurance program, which does not have a process for the approval of participating providers, has witnessed significant allegations of fraud and abuse in the program, (as evidenced by proposals in other portions of the PPGG Budget bill to address No-Fault fraud). One such reason may be the lack of a proper vetting process for participation in that program that currently exists for Workers' Compensation but under this proposal would be eliminated. Moreover, most forms of insurance coverage, whether it be Medicare, Medicaid or commercial health insurance require a vetting process for provider participation to help ensure that patients accessing care under that program are being treated by quality providers.

Of perhaps greatest concern, permitting every physician to participate in the Workers' Compensation program by virtue of their license could impede the processing of claims by

injured workers because many of these physicians may not have the deep knowledge of the Workers' Compensation treatment guideline and claim process that participating physicians must have. Having physicians poorly vetted or less knowledgeable of workers' compensation process provide care could potentially jeopardize an injured worker's legitimate claim under workers' compensation laws.

It is essential that we find solutions to the systematic challenges that deter physician participation in the Workers' Compensation program. However, eliminating the important review role played by county medical societies in the vetting process for participation does not address these challenges, and may have the effect of endangering care for injured workers. **Therefore, we respectfully request that you continue to oppose this provision and that it remains out of the State Budget.** Thank you for your consideration.

**MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE COUNTY OF ALBANY
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Military Culture: Everything Physicians Need to Know about Veterans as Patients

Educational Objectives:

- ★ Describe the unique aspects of military culture and how they impact patients who are veterans
- ★ Explain the Dwyer Peer-to-Peer program as a resource to assist veteran patients re-acclimating from a group to an individual mentality
- ★ Review and identify resources to improve physician's ability to fully treat veterans who are transitioning back into civilian life

PTSD in Returning Veterans

Educational Objectives:

- ★ Identify diagnostic criteria for PTSD
- ★ Discuss medical and psychiatric comorbidities of military related PTSD
- ★ Discuss evidence-based treatment modalities for PTSD including medications and psychotherapy
- ★ Discuss strategies to help veterans overcome stigma to seek and accept treatment for military related trauma

The Special Mental Health Needs of Women Veterans

Educational Objectives:

- ★ Review how the increased role of women in the military has impacted their mental health
- ★ Describe mental health concerns unique to women veterans and how to identify and treat them
- ★ Identify the barriers that women veterans face in getting the specific care they need

The Impact of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) on Veterans

Educational Objectives:

- ★ Define military sexual trauma (MST)
- ★ Identify some of the residual effects MST can have on patients
- ★ Prepare providers to treat patients with MST

For more information, contact:

Nicholas Hospodar at nhospodar@mssny.org or call (518) 465-8085

Funding provided by the New York State Office of Mental Health from a NYS Senate Legislative Grant

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The Medical Society of the State of New York designates each live activity for a maximum of 1.0 **AMA PRA Category 1 credits™**. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Suicide in Veterans

Educational Objectives:

- ★ Address the causes and warning signs of suicide and suicidal behavior among veterans
- ★ Explore evidence-based diagnostic, intervention and treatment options
- ★ Identify barriers to identification and treatment in military culture and methods to overcome them

Substance Use Disorders in Veterans

Educational Objectives:

- ★ Identify Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) in V=veterans
- ★ Discuss evidence-based psychosocial strategies to treat veterans with SUDs
- ★ Discuss Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for veterans with alcohol or opioid use disorders
- ★ Identify barriers to diagnosis and treatment of SUDs in veterans and methods to overcome them

TBI in Returning Veterans

Educational Objectives:

- ★ Identify signs and symptoms indicative of the spectrum from concussion/mild TBI to severe TBI
- ★ Examine evidence based treatment modalities for TBI and when to refer to a specialist
- ★ Identify red flags that indicate alternate or more severe pathology
- ★ Outline an appropriate management plan for a patient presenting with concussion/TBI including a return to "normal life" protocol

Burn Pits: Psychological and Physical Impact on Veterans

Educational Objectives:

- ★ Describe the reported physical and psychological sequelae after burn pit exposure.
- ★ Outline possible symptoms that can result from burn pit exposure.
- ★ Define aerosolized airborne hazards dissipated from prevalent items in burn pits.
- ★ Identify different types of diseases that can be caused by burn pit exposure.



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NEW FEATURE! MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Do you have exciting achievements that you want to share with us? We are happy to include them in our new feature “Member Spotlight” in each issue. You may also submit something on behalf of your colleagues, email us at jmiller@wcms.org—be sure to include any photos you would like us to use!

BOOK REVIEWS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Have you read a great book recently that you would like others to know about? If so, please let us know, we would love to share it with the rest of our readers. If you would like to review a book you’ve read, or send us recommendations, please email them to jmiller@wcms.org and we would be happy to share.



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