



## Interesting Times by Chief of Staff Brian Boyd, MD

There is a Chinese curse: “May you live in Interesting times.” As I reflect on the first 200 days of my chiefship, it certainly has been interesting, but I don’t feel cursed but rather honored to be part of the extraordinary circumstances we have all lived through. I wanted to take the time to reach out to the Medical Staff and review some key recent events and the actions your Medical Executive Committee has taken.

Eric Wexler, Executive Vice President and Chief Executive of the PSJH Southern California region, disclosed far-reaching organizational changes in a memo initially giving an overview on June 16, with Jeremy Zoch (our own CE) providing details on June 19. Your Medical Executive Committee as well as your Staff officers had numerous concerns that were immediately evident. We felt that the proposal to share a CMO with Mission Hospital would really be a no-win situation for the person who would attempt to fill that position. At a time of a still growing pandemic, SJO Medical Staff (as well as the medical staffs of Mission and St. Jude Medical Center) all strongly felt we needed to keep our full-time CMO. This resulted in a MEC motion (June 18) passing that we would delay the decision to veto or affirm the recommendation for the CMO for 60-90 days to better assess the local needs of our ministry. This action rested on the incredibly important responsibility and power given to us by our bylaws which state:

In section 9.2.2 of the Medical Staff Bylaws, under Duties of the Executive Committee, letter J states, “Participating in the interview and review of candidates for position of Chief Medical Officer in the hospital, and in approving or vetoing the selection of any such candidate, with any veto being binding upon the hospital.” I point this out to highlight the value of our Bylaws Committee. Please give thanks to our Bylaws Chair **Robert Del Junco, MD**, and all the members who have labored literally for years fine tuning these critical documents.

I had the honor and responsibility to present this action to our SJO Community Ministry Board (formerly known as Board of Trustees) on June 25. Throughout this time your Staff officers sought continued engagement with the administration with Mr. Jeremy Zoch always available to facilitate our understanding of the changes as well as facilitating transmission of our concerns to Mr. Wexler. The net result of this process was that Mr. Wexler had the wisdom to reverse the changes regarding the CMOs at all three of our ministries. **Scott Rusk, MD**, was offered his full-time position back and we are grateful he has accepted. Scott will remain in charge of our COVID-19 battle!

The most important lesson that I have learned from navigating these troubled seas is that the value of team building (a teaching from my palliative care background) cannot be underestimated. This Chief of Staff lesson actually arose from my first month in office. In January of this year, the final details of the Governance

Reimagined were revealed which did include removing the voting rights at the Board level of the Chief of Staff as well as the Chief of Staff Elect. I prepared a 12-slide presentation outlining strong concerns. In preparing this, I reached out to a number of our former Chiefs of Staff for their wisdom and advice. The presentation message was received and resulted in retaining these voting privileges at all three ministries. I also started the process of reaching out to the current Chiefs of Staff at our sister ministries of St. Jude’s and Mission.

SJO, St. Jude and Mission formed a Dear Neighbor Chief of Staff Group. The members are Chief of Staff, Chief of Staff Elect and Immediate Past Chief of Staff, with intent to invite as appropriate the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Executive. Our Dear Neighbors group focus is on how to best enhance the patient care we can deliver. We have passed an Affiliation Document for our three ministries. We’ve found a common sense of purpose as the issues we all face are more similar than dissimilar.

With the challenges that arose with the organizational changes, our three ministries found that we had no seat at the table when these decisions were made. To remedy this, we first decided to create the table. Our concept of a Chief’s Table was enthusiastically embraced by Mr. Wexler. This core grouping involves the Chief of Staff & Elect from the three ministries sitting down with Mr. Wexler and other regional decision makers with our inaugural meeting held at St. Jude’s on July 9. The plan is to have these meetings every two months, with the next two already planned at the remaining ministries. Our first meeting was remarkable for a frank exchange of views on all sides. We will continue to move forward with a strong sense of engagement.

I am sure challenges will continue to arise and I vow that your Medical Executive Committee will strive to continue to rise to these occasions. We will continue to focus on local control of quality and safety as our Job #1. We intend to transition from a reactive role to now seizing a proactive approach. We all thank you for your continuing support.



### Preventing Account Deactivations

Any Medical Staff members who do not log in to their AD accounts (SJO computer access account or Meditech) for 90 days, they will be deactivated. If they don’t log in for 12 months, we will have to submit a request to give them brand new access. If a physician cannot log in to their AD account, they should call AskIT at 842-922-7548 first before calling the Medical Staff Office at 714-771-8056. If IT informs them 12 months have lapsed and they cannot re-activate their account, Medical Staff Office can assist with the Security Access Request process to obtain a new one.



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## In the Trenches with Ervin P. Ruzics, MD, Medical Director of Kidney Transplant Center, and Robert Naraghi, MD, Renal and Pancreas Transplant Surgeon

St. Joseph Hospital’s Renal Transplant Program’s growth trajectory is accelerating. As the kidney transplant center for the entire Providence St. Joseph Health Southern California region, the center now serves patients from greater Orange and Los Angeles Counties and Inland Empire, as well as the Bakersfield area. It has emerged as the only non-academic kidney transplant center in the LA/OC area.

When St. Vincent Medical Center closed due to bankruptcy in January, more than 300 patients waiting for a new kidney needed a new home. They found one at SJO, which absorbed St. Vincent’s kidney transplant program and its staff. In February, SJO’s staff was notified that United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) approved the transfer of St. Vincent patients. Three days later, Melanie Sanchez became the first “new” patient to receive a transplant. “I felt like my life was saved,” she said. “There is a whole new world for me to explore...”

In seeking a good home for his patients, nationally renowned kidney and pancreas transplant surgeon Dr. Robert Naraghi (who served as medical director of St. Vincent’s transplant program and was on staff there since 1997) reached out to Director of Renal Services, Dialysis and Transplantation Wendy Escobedo and Dr. Ruzics. “We’ve been colleagues for 20 years, doing laparoscopic donor nephrectomies cases. “I’m pleased to work with people I like and respect, and excited about the impact we will have.”

Dr. Ruzics adds, “It’s a big undertaking, but fortunately St. Joseph Hospital was in a position to care for people left with-

out a center who would have been scattered to the winds. All could smoothly transfer without a significant delay. In the first half of this year, we performed 16 transplants – twice as many as in recent years – in spite of covid-19. We’ve also taken on nearly 4,000 already transplanted patients, who often have very complicated conditions.”



**Ervin P. Ruzics, MD**



**Robert Naraghi, MD**

SJO is working to find a permanent satellite office in Los Angeles for treating and monitoring of patients.

Also, in November 2018 when the kidney transplant program in Riverside closed, renal transplant surgeon **Hakan Erik Wahlstrom, MD** (photo not available), joined the SJO staff and brought many of his transplant waitlisted patients.

There are only 260 UNOS-certified transplant surgeons in the entire U.S. SJO’s program now has three highly qualified, UNOS-certified transplant surgeons. A transplant nephrologist will be added to the staff in the near future.

SJO’s program has averaged 20 to 25 transplants a year. With more staff, the hospital expects to perform another 50 to 60 each year.

In the months ahead, SJO will apply for UNOS certification for pancreas transplants, making it a multi-organ transplant center. Dr. Naraghi has had one of (if not the) highest pancreas transplant volumes in Los Angeles County.