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## Attention Neurosurgeons

*Kenneth Blumenfeld, MD, President*

The California Association of Neurological Surgeons Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 12-14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at the U.S. Grant in San Diego, CA! I have put together a program that will help prepare California Neurosurgeons for the future!

To say 2017 produced a tumultuous legislative and regulatory cycle would be an understatement. The 2018 CANS annual meeting will provide an update on where we have been and where we are heading. This information will be invaluable in navigating the complex healthcare delivery issues we will face in 2018. Highly anticipated will be presentations from AMA, CMA, AANS, CSNS, and Washington Committee leadership. We will also have the opportunity to meet and receive special "direct from the hill" input from Congressman Raul Ruiz, MD and Vanila Singh, MD from HHS.

Other thought provoking activities will include a drill down session on sub specialization, fellowships, and CAST certification in neurosurgery. We will be introduced to the world of precision medicine and as always the resident presentations will focus on socioeconomic issues and be a highlight of our meeting. **Bottom line is you don't want to miss this meeting!**

### PLEASE SAVE THE DATE!

We have secured a fabulous rate of \$249 for the historic U.S. Grant Hotel in downtown San Diego! This hotel is near the Gaslamp district and less than one mile to the Air & Space Museum and the Maritime Museum! This meeting is on Martin Luther King Weekend and this very popular hotel may sell out. You can start booking now! Visit [www.cans1.org](http://www.cans1.org) and click on the CANS annual meeting bullet in the calendar!

Draft Agenda is below:

### California Neurosurgery- Preparing for the Future SCHEDULE of EVENTS January 12-14, 2018

#### FRIDAY

8am-1 NuVasive Didactic course w lab-FREE! Sign up today!  
2-5pm CANS Board Meeting (open to all members-snacks before)  
**7 - 9:00 Opening Night Reception**

#### SATURDAY

**6:30-7:30 Continental Breakfast- Please visit EXHIBITS**  
7:30-7:35 Kenneth Blumenfeld, M.D. **President's Report**  
7:35-7:40 Mark Linsky, M.D. **Secretary's Report** Voting: BOD/Nominating Committee  
7:40-7:45 Ted Kaczmar, M.D. **Treasurer's Report**  
**Session 1: Growing Trend towards Neurosurgical Sub specialization**

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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8:00-8:30 Dr. Robert Harbaugh – **Update on accredited enfolded residency fellowships and CAST certification**  
 8:30-9:00 Dr. Abou-Samra- **Spine fellowship and specialization is the way of the future**  
 9:00-9:30 Dr. Shelly Timmons – **General neurosurgeons, core competency & scope of practice**  
 9:30-10:00 Dr. Mike McDermott- **Specialization in cranial surgery is a must**  
 10:00-10:30 Dr. Ganesh Rao- **Sub specialization in intracranial surgery will fragment neurosurgery**  
 10:30-11:00 Q&A, **Panel Discussion**  
**11:00-11:30 Break - Please visit exhibits**  
**Session 2: California Legislative Update**  
 11:30-11:50 Dr. Ted Mazer-**Surprise Billing and AB 72**  
 11:50-12:10 CMA Staff-**State of CURES update**  
 12:10-12:30 Janus Norman-**Prop 56, "Show me the money!"**  
**12:30 – 1:30 Lunch with Exhibitors**  
**Session 3: Quality and value in neurosurgery**  
 1:30-1:45 Dr. Ann Stroink-**Washington CMTE Update**  
 1:45-2:15 TBD **MACRA "Rules"**  
 2:30-3:00 Dr. Robert Hertzka- **ACA and Healthcare Reform...What Now?**  
 3:00- 3:15 Dr. Josh Rosenow- **CSNS update**  
 3:15-3:30 Dr. John Ratliff – **Coding and Reimbursement**  
 3:30-4:00 Congressman **Raul Ruiz-MD- Update from the hill**  
 4:00-4:30 Dr. Vanila Singh - **HHS update**  
 4:30-4:45 Dr. Kenneth Blumenfeld- **Closing Remarks**

**SATURDAY BANQUET –MUST HAVE TICKET****6:30 PM Cocktails****7:00 PM Dinner****8:00 PM Pevehouse Award- Dr. Steven L. Giannotta****SUNDAY****7:00-7:40 Breakfast/Please visit Exhibits****Session 1**

8:00-9:00

**Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Precision Medicine, and Neurosurgery****9:00-9:30****BREAK-PLEASE VISIT EXHIBITS****9:30- 12:00****Resident/Fellow Presentations****University of California San Francisco; Catherine Miller, MD***To Fuse or Not to Fuse? Readmission, Reoperation, and Patient Reported Outcomes after Surgery for Grade 1 Lumbar Spondylolisthesis in 332 Patients from the Prospective Quality Outcomes Database***University of California Irvine; Nathan Oh, MD and Kieu Tran, MD***"Strategic Partnerships Increase Patient Access to Surgical Treatment and Case Volume at a Level 4 Epilepsy Center"***Desert Regional Medical Center, Palm Springs; Brian Fiani, DO***Impact of Technology on Socioeconomics/Health Care Quality***Stanford, Yi Ren Chen, MD***"Incidence of C5 Palsy after Posterior Cervical Procedures: Analysis of Risk Factors using Clinical and Radiographic Measurements"***University of California Los Angeles; Giyarpuram Prashant, MD****University of Southern California; Joshua Bakhsheshian, MD****University of California San Diego; Dan Cleary, MD****Loma Linda; T. Marc Eastin, MD****Riverside University Health System; Hammad Ghanchi, DO***Back Pain's contribution to the National Opioid Crisis***University of California Davis; Jared Ament, MD, MPH**

12:00-12:15 Award for Resident



See you in sunny San Diego!

## How Old Is Too Old to Perform Brain Surgery?

Randall W. Smith, MD, Editor

Considering that more than one-third of U.S. surgeons are older than 55, the Mayo Clinic recently presented the results of a survey conducted regarding monitoring neurosurgeons because of age. The study is the first to survey neurosurgeons on their attitudes toward ceasing practice and testing in late career. Published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, the authors (Fredric Meyer, M.D., Kerry Olsen, M.D. and Robert Spinner, M.D, all from the Mayo and co-authors Maya Babu, M.D., University of Miami and Linda Liau, M.D., Ph.D., UCLA) reported that the survey was sent to 4,489 USA neurosurgeons and 1,449 responded. 65% of the respondents were 50 and older.

The authors, all of whom are neurosurgeons except Dr. Olson (ENT) with Dr. Meyer also the Executive Director of the ABNS, reported as follows:

Asked how to fairly evaluate aging neurosurgeons, respondents said:

- There should be no absolute age cutoff, 956 (66 percent).
- Neurosurgeons 65 and older should undergo additional testing, including cognitive assessment or a review of cases, in addition to a standard Maintenance of Certification exam, 718 (50 percent).
- A Maintenance of Certification exam should include individual case log and patient outcome review, 766 (59 percent).
- A Maintenance of Certification exam should be tailored to accommodate the aging neurosurgeon, 606 (42 percent).

In an accompanying editorial, Dr. Olsen, who no longer performs surgery, says, "Deciding when to end one's surgical practice can be an extremely difficult decision.". He suggests interventions such as assisting surgeons with ergonomics to prevent work-related injuries, asking younger colleagues for honest assessment of one's skills, and creating opportunities for hospitals and clinics to use surgeons' talents beyond being "captain of the operating room suite." ❖

### CANS MISSION STATEMENT

'TO ADVOCATE FOR THE PRACTICE OF CALIFORNIA NEUROSURGERY  
BENEFITTING OUR PATIENTS AND PROFESSION'

## Brain Waves

*Deborah C. Henry, MD, Associate Editor*

On January 12-14, 2018, the California Association of Neurological Surgeons will celebrate its 45<sup>th</sup> annual meeting. All the meetings that I have attended bring back memories, but for different reasons. I can mark the events of my life in relation to our CANS meetings.

The first one that I attended was in (the year Tom Hoyt was president) in San Francisco. Tom Campbell was a US Congressman running for a position as US Senator. He gave a stirring speech on his upbringing, the effects of the Stark Law on the practice of medicine, and his view for a better business of medicine. I had just recently moved to California after leaving a position as an employed physician in Texas. I purchased another neurosurgeon's practice after having worked with her for a little over one year. HMOs were replacing fee-for-service, and I had serious doubts about my business success in the changing environment. Tom Campbell gave me hope.

In 2001, the meeting was at the Hotel Del Coronado. I had a room about as far away from the meeting hall as was physically possible. I was in my first trimester of pregnancy with my son Stephen, and I was tired all the time. It was a different exhaustion from what I was used to in residency. Nothing would cure it. I would get back from the meeting and then try to do some CME work that I had brought along, only to fall right asleep. I developed a new respect for my mother who did pregnancy again and again.

The back to back years at Sutton Place in Newport Beach (2003-4) were memorable for spending time with my office partner from Pasadena. Bill Wright, past president of CANS, and I had shared an office from 1997-2001, and had remained good friends until his untimely death several years later. I spent time with him again at the Sheraton San Diego Suites (2006) when they brought their dog Wendy (I or II) with them. I hadn't realized until then that one could bring a dog to a high-end hotel.

I remember going to the Sacramento Hyatt Regency when Jack Bonner was president in 2007. My five-year-old son and his nanny, Bea., traveled with me. It was freezing cold. He loved the water, and they sat in the Jacuzzi spa until icicles formed on the edges of their hair. While I sat in the meeting, they toured the capital and tried to catch a glimpse of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The three trips to the Grand Californian in Anaheim (2008, 2010, 2012) were a treat. There is nothing better than getting a discounted room to the best Disneyland hotel. The food is always spectacular, and my annual pass got a work out on the day after the meeting.

In 2009, Dr. Abou-Samra had his meeting in an off the track site of Quail Lodge. I played putt-putt with my son on its grounds. The Saturday night dinner was set at the Monterey Aquarium, marking the first time I remember travelling for the evening banquet.

I missed Dr. Ken Ott's meeting in San Francisco in 2011. My ex-husband had just filed for divorce, and I needed to stay around home to deal with its aftermath to both myself and Stephen. It was a time where family really needed to come first.

Dr. Austin Colohan raised the stakes in 2013 by having a casino opening night at the Queen Mary in Long Beach. He introduced dance-cards for meeting with exhibitors and prize-drawings for those who had their dance-cards signed. What novel ideas!

The Monterey meeting of Dr. Ted Kaczmar's raced around the Laguna Seca track, literally, as many members took to the road at the Skip Barber Racing School. The hotel stared at the Pacific Ocean and the Monterey Aquarium beckoned down the street. Dr. Kaczmar's meeting also set a record for the number of exhibitors attending.

The 2015 meeting at Balboa Bay Club in Newport Beach was memorable for being the meeting hosted by the first woman President of CANS (me). At the same time, I was serving as Secretary-Treasurer of the Western, working a full-time job, and being a single mom. Boy did I learned the skill of time management!

Dr. Phil Kissel picked his local area of San Luis Obispo to have the 2016 CANS meeting. I had never spent time in this beautiful area. The hotel straddled the beach and beckoned us outdoors. Dr. Kissel introduced panel discussions to the meeting which were an enormous success.

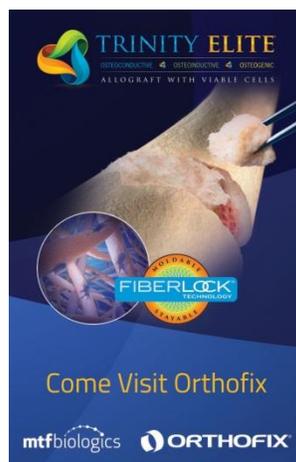
Last year, Praveen Mummaneni shared his home area of San Francisco at the Intercontinental Mark Hopkins on Nob Hill. I had never been to this part of the city where people leave their hearts. We were blessed with clear days and relaxing views. Praveen added more panel discussions, and this was the first meeting that we had the help of our new Board residents.

Ken Blumenfeld, one of the most politically knowledgeable neurosurgeons that I know, hosts this 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the California Association of Neurological surgeons at another unique place in California-the US Grant Hotel in San Diego. This hotel dates to 1867 and is the first luxury hotel in San Diego. Mrs. Fannie Chaffe Grant purchased the hotel in 1895 and named it after her husband, the 18<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

The annual meetings of the California Association of Neurological Surgeons continue to evolve. Once only socio-economic, they now include basic and clinical science as well, stimulating panel discussions, updates from the Washington committee and often the RUC. (RVS Update Committee). But mostly these meetings form life-long memories between us stalwarts of the neurosurgery community. See you in San Diego! ❖

**DO YOU KNOW A NEUROSURGEON NEW TO CALIFORNIA?**

**TELL THEM ABOUT CANS AND DIRECT THEM TO THE CANS WEBSITE: [WWW.CANS1.ORG](http://WWW.CANS1.ORG)! THERE IS A MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION ON THE SITE**



## **They couldn't save our home, but they saved our ... Flag!**

*Moustapha Abou-Samra, MD, Associate Editor*

**O**n December 5, 2017, our lives suddenly changed.

In a matter of minutes, Thomas Fire, the largest and most vicious in the history of the State of California burned our home to the ground. We were not alone to suffer this tragedy: many of our neighbors had the same fate. More than 550 homes were destroyed in our beautiful city, a real devastation of the beautiful little city we call home.

Our family lived at 557 Via Cielito, Ventura CA 93003. We referred to our home as "557". We still do, even though it no longer exists as a physical structure. We all feel like a part of us died. It was devastating to see the remains.

While waiting to be allowed back to our neighborhood, we kept hearing about the extent of destruction and we saw some images on various media outlets, as well as photos taken by neighbors who refused to leave their homes. We even saw images of our own destroyed home: these images were hard to absorb and comprehend. But, when we were finally allowed to go back, twelve days later, we were shocked to see what used to be homes and cars and beautiful green yards. What used to be our neighborhood. It was surreal. Adding to the surrealism, was a green material that was sprayed by Cal Fire on the destroyed properties; I gather this was to contain hazardous material. I kept thinking that this was a scene from a movie, a horror movie.

The flagpole at 557 is still standing. I knew that our neighbors were keeping our flag for us ...

Nothing remained of our home, otherwise. Even our yard was burned. It was a beautiful oasis, where I took photos of roses almost every morning and shared them with my family on an instant message stream that keeps us connected even though we live in different spaces. We call this stream Fam-Ba-Bam, it's been a joyous life saver.

How is this possible? We have so many beautiful memories associated with this special place. Two of our daughters were married at 557; I remember every detail. The third got ready for her wedding there. I waited for her in our living room that commanded a spectacular view of the Pacific Ocean. I remember driving her to her wedding site, on top of a hill overlooking Ventura and the world. That site also burned.

The memories of happy events keep competing in my head. So many. Preparing meals together as a family for family and friends in our kitchen, a kitchen that was the center of our home and one that allowed us to enjoy views of spectacular sunsets, while our grandchildren were running around exploring this corner or that ... thinking of this makes my heart smile.

Our artwork, so lovingly collected over the years ... is gone. You remember this? You remember that? I find myself asking my wife and individual adult children, or just asking myself. Of course, I do, and I remember the stories that went with each, with a mixture of relish and melancholy.

My books? They are gone. I inherited my passion for collecting books from my father and, I am proud to have passed it on to my kids. I had a beautiful collection of leather bound, gold inscribed books of all neurology and neuroscience related topics including the classics. I also lost several first edition, signed manuscripts, including my daughter's collection of essays and poems that she wrote as a college thesis.

Even my trivial collection of logo T-shirts is gone. I used to enjoy buying them to remember an event or a place. At some point this habit got out of hand, and I had a lot of them, so my family put me on a T-shirt buying restriction. Here is a silver lining: the restriction is now lifted.

Everything is gone ... but our flag was saved!

In August of 2002, to celebrate being in this amazing country for thirty years, my wife and I decided to build a platform for a flagpole and a flagpole to hold a large American flag that can be seen from far, in front of our home. We wanted it to be very personal, as the flag is very personal to us. On top of the pole stands a star representing the Lone Star of Texas, also a place we call home. The base has five sides, one representing each of our children. We selected a collection of sayings meaningful to us, for each of the sides. We had them inscribed on bronze plaques. The Pledge of Allegiance and Emma Lazarus' quote about immigrants on one plaque; Why me Lord on another; Amazing Grace on the third; America the Beautiful on the fourth; and a saying by Master Jedi Yoda and one attributed to a slave complete the collection.

We were so proud of this flag ...

Almost two years ago, Bill Bays, the secretary of the George S. Patton chapter, the local chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, noticed our flag and after discussion with his members, we were awarded a certificate in recognition of an exemplary display of the American Flag. I was deeply honored, particularly since I am an immigrant and a proud American of Syrian birth.

Another group of men noticed our flag on December 5, 2017. A team of fire fighters from the United States Forest Service led by David Lossi, were patrolling our street. But I am told they could not do much since they ran out of water. They noticed that our flag was about to burn, and decided to save it. While taking the flag down, a corner actually burned. The Santa Ana winds were very strong and the firefighters put their lives in danger in order to save our beloved flag.

The photo attached was taken by photographer Rob Varela, and was posted on his Instagram account. I saw this for the first time three days before Christmas. At once jarring and beautiful, the image reflects the heroism of our fire fighters.



We plan to raise a new large flag again at 557, hopefully soon; we must wait until power is restored so that the flag can be lit at night. As for what's next, it is too soon to decide how to rebuild our lives. But we will take it one step at a time, and all the while 557 will remain in our hearts. ❖

## ATTENTION EXHIBITORS:

The CANS Annual Meeting is fast approaching and we want to see your company there! We have **redesigned our website** and our top sponsors will be featured prominently on the home page! Check it out at [www.cans1.org](http://www.cans1.org). Please contact [emily@cans1.org](mailto:emily@cans1.org) for more information!

The meeting will be at the historic U.S. Grant hotel downtown San Diego, CA

**CANS would like to thank our PLATINUM SPONSOR (Synaptive) and GOLD Sponsor (Integra LifeScience) for 2018!**

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## Tidbits from the Editor

### Changes to State Disability Insurance (SDI) Benefits

Assembly Bill 908, signed by Governor Brown on April 11, 2016, changes the following:

- Increases the Disability Insurance (DI) and Paid Family Leave (PFL) wage replacement rate from approximately 55 percent to approximately 60 to 70 percent of past earnings.
- Eliminates the PFL seven-day, non-payable waiting period.

The new law takes effect January 1, 2018.

The elimination of the PFL waiting period changes the length of time to file a timely claim to 41 days.

A new version of the *Claim for Paid Family Leave (PFL) Benefits*, DE 2501F, is available. Please order a new supply of the claim form, DE 2501F Rev. 2.1 (11-17) to provide to patients. To order this new form, visit the [EDD Forms and Publications](#) page or call 1-877-238-4373.

### Ready or Not—here comes the Comp Formulary

WorkComp Central reports that California regulators revised prescription drug formulary rules take effect Jan. 1.

The Office of Administrative Law approved the Division of Workers' Compensation's rules to create the formulary that lawmakers ordered up when they passed AB 1124 in 2015. The division released a formal rules proposal in May and revised the draft twice before sending a final version to the Office of Administrative Law.

Under the rules that will apply for all prescriptions written on or after Jan. 1, doctors will be able to dispense medications designated as "exempt" without going through prospective utilization review, as long as the prescriptions comport to recommendations in new treatment guidelines that went into effect at the start of November.

The division in November incorporated into the Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine's treatment guidelines, published by Reed Group, which also serve as the foundation for the recommendations in the formulary.

Drugs that are identified as non-exempt, and those that are not listed in the formulary, will continue to require prior approval to determine whether they are appropriate. Compound drugs, even if comprising entirely ingredients that are exempt from review, will also require prior authorization.

Opioids will be subject to UR in most cases under the recently approved rules. But a special fill exception will allow doctors to prescribe up to a four-day supply of drugs such as Vicodin within seven days from the date of injury.

The division's rules will also allow a perioperative fill of certain drugs without review during a period lasting from four days prior to surgery to four days after. ❖

# Thought for the Month:

If *pro* and *con* are opposites, doesn't that make *congress* the opposite of *progress*?

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**Meetings of Interest for the next 12 months:**

North American Neuromodulation Society: Ann. Meet., January. 11-14, 2018, Las Vegas, NV  
**CANS, Annual Meeting, January 12-14, 2018; US Grant Hotel, San Diego, CA**  
 AANS/CNS Joint Cerebrovascular Section: Ann. Meeting, Jan. 22-23, 2018, Los Angeles, CA  
 Southern Neurosurgical Society: Ann. Meeting, Feb. 28-March 3, 2018, San Juan, Puerto Rico  
 AANS/CNS Joint Spine Section: Annual Meeting, March 14-17, 2018, Orlando, FL  
 Neurosurgical Society of America: Annual Meeting, June 10 - 13, 2018 Jackson Hole, Wyoming  
 CSNS Meeting, April 27-28, 2018, New Orleans, LA  
 AANS: Annual Meeting, April 28-May 2, 2018, New Orleans, LA  
 NERVES Annual meeting, New Orleans, LA, 2018, Date TBA  
 California Neurology Society: Ann. Meeting, 2018, TBA  
 AANS/CNS Joint Pain Section Bi-Annual Meeting, 2018, TBA.  
 Rocky Mountain Neurosurgical Society: Ann. Meeting, 2018, TBA  
 New England Neurosurgical Society: Annual Meeting, 2018, TBA  
 Western Neurosurgical Society: Annual Meeting, September 14-17, 2018, Kona Coast, Hawaii, HI  
 CSNS Meeting, October 5-6, 2018, Houston, Texas  
 Congress of Neurological Surgeons: Annual Meeting, October 6-10, 2018, Houston, Texas  
 International Society for Pediatric Neurosurgery: Annual meeting, October 7-11, 2018, Tel Aviv, Israel  
 North American Spine Society: Annual Meeting, October 26-29, 2018, Los Angeles, CA  
 AANS/CNS Joint Pediatric NS Section: Ann. Meeting, 2018, TBA  
 Cervical Spine Research Society: Annual Meeting, 2018, TBA

Any **CANS** member who is looking for a new associate/partner/PA/NP or who is looking for a position (all California neurosurgery residents are CANS members and get this newsletter) is free to submit a 150 word summary of a position available or of one's qualifications for a two month posting in this newsletter. Submit your text to the CANS office by E-mail ([emily@cans1.org](mailto:emily@cans1.org)) or fax (916-457-8202)—Ed. ❖

**T**he assistance of Emily Schile and Dr. Kenneth Blumenfeld in the preparation of this newsletter is acknowledged and appreciated.

- To place a newsletter ad, contact the executive office for complete price list and details.
- Comments can be sent to the editor, Randall W. Smith, M.D., at [rws-avopro@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rws-avopro@sbcglobal.net) or to the CANS office [emily@cans1.org](mailto:emily@cans1.org).
- Past newsletter issues are available on the CANS website at [www.cans1.org](http://www.cans1.org).
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