

Lee County Medical Society

Bulletin

Physicians Caring for Our Community

Physician Wellness

A gift to yourself

Check Out Our
**Hurricane
Make-Up
Dates**

Break Ups

*criteria for terminating
a patient relationship*



time to
**RENEW
YOUR
DUES**
for 2025

Preserving
Medical
History

4Q 2024 • Volume 48 • Issue 4



BULLETIN

Lee County Medical Society is a Virtual Operation
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4Q 2024 EDITOR

John W. Snead, MD

MANAGING EDITOR

Julie Ramirez, CAE, Executive Director
239.936.1645
jramirez@lcmsfl.org

MEMBERSHIP

Annaliese Alfonso
admin@lcmsfl.org

MARKETING

Mollie Page
marketing@lcmsfl.org

LCMS DISCLOSURE POLICY

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Lee County Medical Society Mission Statement

The mission of Lee County Medical Society is to advocate for physicians and their relationships with patients; promote public health and uphold the professionalism of the practice of medicine.

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*Members are encouraged to submit photos to be considered for the Bulletin cover.
Must be large format/300dpi. Email photos to marketing@lcmsfl.org*



from your LCMS staff: Julie, Annaliese & Mollie

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THURS, NOV 21st 6:00pm - 8:30pm	LCMS 12th Annual Medical Service Awards Forest Country Club 6100 Club Blvd. SW, Ft. Myers
SAT, NOV 23th 1:00pm - 5:30pm	LCMS 2nd Annual Golf Tournament Forest Country Club 6100 Club Blvd. SW, Ft. Myers
THURS, DEC 5th 6:00pm - 8:30pm	LCMS Physician Member Holiday Party Burroughs Home & Gardens 2505 First Street, Ft. Myers
FRI, JAN 10th 5:30pm - 7:30pm	LCMS Cocktail Hour Shibley Cardiothoracic Center 9981 S. HealthPark Dr., Ste. 156, Ft. Myers
SAT, JAN 11th 8:00am - 12:00pm	LCMS CME Day Doubletree @ Bell Tower 13051 Bell Tower Dr., Ft. Myers
FRI, FEB 7th 5:30pm - 7:30pm	LCMS Cocktail Hour Advocate Radiation 9961 Estero Oaks Drive, Fort Myers

RVSP to LCMS events at www.lcmsfl.org

NEW MEMBERS



Brandon Barnes, MD
Sports Medicine
Orthopedic Specialists of SWFL
14601 Hope Center Loop
Fort Myers, FL 33912
239-334-7000 fax: 239-334-7070
www.ossfw.com



Kristen Howard, DO
Musculoskeletal Imaging
Radiology Regional
14551 Hope Center Loop
Fort Myers, FL 33912
239-936-2316
www.radiologyregional.com



Rachel Sewnarine, MD
Family Medicine
Lee Physician Group
13782 Plantation Rd., Ste 201
Fort Myers, FL 33912
239-343-1100
www.leehealth.org



Xiangkun Cao, MD
Cardio-Oncology
Heart Institute at Metro
13340 Metro Pkwy., Ste. 200
Fort Myers, FL 33966
239-343-0550 fax: 239-343-4013
www.leehealth.org



Sally Kandah, MD
Pediatrics
Physicians' Primary Care of SWFL
9350 Camelot Drive
Fort Myers, FL 33919
239-481-5437 fax: 239-481-0570
www.ppcswfl.com



Anum Tanvir, DO
Family Medicine
Lee Physician Group
2441 Surfside Blvd., Ste. 200
Fort Myers, FL 33914
239-481-4111 fax: 239-343-4141
www.leehealth.org



Jason Cullen, MD
Non-Surgical Treatment
of Spinal Disorders
Orthopedic Specialists of SWFL
14601 Hope Center Loop
Fort Myers, FL 33912
www.ossfw.com



Cuong Kim Le, DO
Family Medicine
Lee Physician Group
930 S. Main Street
LaBelle, FL 33935
863-674-5520 fax: 863-674-5521
www.leehealth.org



Amir Qureshi, MD
Orthopedic Foot & Ankle
Joint Implant Surgeons of FL
7331 College Pkwy.
Fort Myers, FL 33907
239-337-2003 fax: 239-337-3168
www.jointimplant.com



Jenna DeFrancesco, MD
Family Medicine
Lee Physician Group
13782 Plantation Rd., Ste. 201
Fort Myers, FL 33912
239-343-1100 fax: 239-468-7916
www.leehealth.org



Mark Leo, MD
Urology
Precision Healthcare Specialists
13731 Metropolis Avenue
Fort Myers, FL 33912
239-423-7155 fax: 239-423-7205
www.phspecialists.com



Justin Rock, MD
Orthopedic Surgery
Joint Implant Surgeons of FL
7331 College Pkwy., Ste. 300
Fort Myers, FL 33907
239-337-2003 fax: 239-337-3168
www.jointimplant.com



Ashraf El-Dabh, MD
Cardiology
Heart Institute at Metro
13340 Metro Pkwy., Ste. 200
Fort Myers, FL 33966
239-343-0550 fax: 239-343-4013
www.leehealth.org



Sydne McKechnie, MD
Emergency Medicine
Lee Physician Group
13681 Doctors Way
Fort Myers, FL 33912
239-343-1000
www.leehealth.org



Khalid Sabha, MD
Family Medicine
Fort Myers Primary Care & Wellness
14131 Metropolis Avenue
Fort Myers, FL 33912
239-922-0909 fax: 800-785-2279
www.fmpcs.com



Wladislaw Fedoriw, MD
Physical Medicine & Rehab
Advanced Pain Management
& Spine Specialists
8255 College Pkwy., Ste 200
Fort Myers, FL 33919
239-437-8000
www.apmss.net



Andr s Mel ndez-Ded s, MD
Pain Management
Joint Implant Surgeons of FL
7331 College Pkwy., Ste 300
Fort Myers, FL 33907
239-337-2003 fax: 239-337-3168
www.jointimplant.com



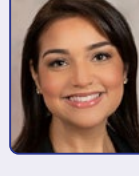
Theresa Vensel, MD
Women's Imaging
Radiology Regional
14551 Hope Center Loop
Fort Myers, FL 33912
239-936-2316
www.radiologyregional.com



Laura Hart, DO
Family Medicine
Lee Physician Group
26800 S. Tamiami Trail, Ste. 340
Bonita Springs, FL 34134
239-495-4490 fax: 239-468-7923
www.leehealth.org



Stephen Raben, MD
Family Medicine
Private Physicians of SWFL
9722 Commerce Center Court
Fort Myers, FL 33908
239-415-1111 fax: 239-415-1199
www.privatephysiciansofswfl.com



Laura Veras, MD
Internal Medicine
Lee Physician Group
3501 Health Center Blvd., Ste. 2120
Bonita Springs, FL 34135
239-495-4390 fax: 239-343-4083
www.leehealth.org



Nariman Heshmati, MD
OB/GYN
Lee Health
9800 S. HealthPark Dr., Ste 200
Fort Myers, FL 33908
239-343-6248
www.leehealth.org



Brittany Russell, DO
Emergency Care
Golisano Children's Hospital of SWFL
9981 S. HealthPark Drive
Fort Myers, FL 33908
239-343-6260
www.leehealth.org



Steven Voiles, MD
Internal Medicine
Physicians' Primary Care of SWFL
7381 College Pkwy., Ste 110
Fort Myers, FL 33907
239-482-1010 fax: 239-481-1481
www.ppcswfl.com

KEEP ENJOYING THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP. RENEW YOUR DUES TODAY!

MEMBERSHIP STRENGTHENS PHYSICIANS AND THE COMMUNITY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Scott Caesar, MD

Serving as your President of the Lee County Medical Society for the past year has been a gratifying and humbling experience.

Because of you, the members, we have accomplished so much, and I look forward to seeing the growth of membership, service, and events in the years to come.

Throughout this year, we have seen our membership grow to over 800 members. While impressive, we still have room for more. Talk to your peers and encourage them to join. The Physician Wellness Program continues to provide confidential and free mental health services for all members. With physician burnout a real issue, your membership helps provide this service and aid your fellow doctors.

Social events have taken a leap as well. Monthly happy hours, CME events, and the annual golf tournament provide a forum to join your peers outside the office or hospital. Your membership allows us to do this and even more events are planned for the years to come.

In the future, we hope to expand the services the LCMS can provide the citizens of Lee County as well as physicians.

Medical school scholarships and physician extender recruitment programs are just a few of the new additions we hope to bring in 2025 and beyond. Growing our membership helps accomplish this.

While we continue to tackle a changing medical environment in Lee County, the LCMS continues to be your greatest advocate. With your continued membership, we hope to add even more. I cannot wait to see what else there is to come!



HELP US GROW

Share this newsletter
with a colleague.

JOIN or RENEW TODAY

Scan the QR code to start
or extend your membership.



MEMBER NEWS

MEMBER STATUS UPDATES

Dr. Viswanathan Chokkavelu is seeking part-time or full-time work at an internal medicine or primary care adults-only practice. Contact Dr. Velu at vchokkavelu33@gmail.com or (750) 359-0337.

Dr. Erin Heitman, a board-eligible urologic surgeon, has joined Precision Healthcare Specialists. He will service patients at its Bonita Springs and Port Charlotte offices.

LCMS board member **Dr. Kristina Mirabeau-Beale** has been selected to participate in the 2025 Florida Medical Association Leadership Academy.

Urologist **Dr. David Harris** has joined Precision Healthcare Specialists. He will service patients at its Bonita Springs office.

NEW OFFICE LOCATIONS

Physicians' Primary Care has opened a new practice at 10200 Arcos Avenue, Ste 1010 in Estero.

Dr. Barrett Ginsberg and **Ginsberg Eye** has relocated to 9441 Corkscrew Palms Circle, Suite 201, Estero, FL 33928. New phone: (239) 325-2020, and new fax (239) 325-2016.

OFFICE SPACE FOR LEASE

Looking to expand into Bonita Springs?

Sublease office space in the Mark Montgomery, MD ENT office at 9240 Bonita Beach Road, Ste 1106. Call Dr. Price Sonkarley at (239) 495-6200 for more information.

IN MEMORIAM

It is with profound sorrow that we announce the passing of this Lee County physician:

LCMS Member & Pediatrician Dr. Nuel Celebrado

FREE JOB LISTINGS THRU 2024

LCMS members can enjoy posting FREE job openings through 2024! Contact marketing@lcmsfl.org for a discount code. www.lcmsfl.org/jobboard

WORK & BOUNDARIES

THE RAMIREZ REPORT: Julie Ramirez, CAE, LCMS Executive Director



Every school season I enjoy “quality” time in my car where I spend that time listening to books.

I just finished the book, *Boundaries* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend. This book was full of light bulb moments for me. The chapter about boundaries and work had some good data that I'd like to share.

We all should know that a lack of boundaries creates problems in the workplace. Here are some common problems:

- getting saddled with another person's responsibilities,
- working too much overtime,
- misplaced priorities,
- difficult coworkers,
- critical attitudes,
- conflicts with authority,
- expecting too much of work,
- taking work-related stress home, and
- disliking your job.

Whew! We've all had one or two of these in our work history. But let me elaborate on what the authors say about a select few.

Misplaced Priorities

Sometimes you must place limits on yourself. You need to know how much time and energy you have and work accordingly. Learn your limits. I agree with the book when it says effective workers do two things: **they strive to do excellent work, and they spend their time on the most important things.** It is a balance of saying no, or wait, to the unimportant issues and saying no to the inclination to do less than your very best. Having limits keeps your priorities in line. When you know how much time you have to spend on work, you use that time wisely and efficiently. For me, a good list helps keep me in line and on task.

Difficult Coworkers

I like how the book reminded me that you only have the power to change yourself. You can't change another person. Seeing the other person and their problems as a problem to be fixed is to give that person power over you and your well being. Little steps of reminding yourself that **you control YOUR attitude**, you take back your power.

Taking Work-Related Stress Home

Hmm, but what if you work from home, like me? The book says we need to keep some boundaries on work and keep it out of the home/homelife. There are two components to this – emotional and finite things.

Emotional components usually have a root with character issues that need to be worked on. For example, your boss calls for a one-on-one meeting on Friday at 4pm. An instant thought is that you are about to be fired. The character strength of knowing oneself has integrity, is hard working and a studious worker will change your perspective even if the meeting has a sour outcome.

Finite components are time, energy and other resources. If you think about it, the job is never done. Remembering that is key. There's always a Monday to come back to the project. And if we had our limits in place and our priorities set at the beginning of the week, we can go home satisfied with the work we did and look forward to Monday.

If you have already read this book, I hope you will smile with remembrance of learning the importance of having good boundaries or at least trying to. If this is the first time hearing about it, the other chapters include boundary lessons with your family, friends, spouse, children, the digital age, yourself and God.

TERMINATING PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS

Julie Brightwell, JD, RN, Director, Healthcare Systems Patient Safety, and Richard F. Cahill, JD, Vice President and Associate General Counsel, The Doctors Company, Part of TDC Group

A review of our call data shows that terminating patient relationships consistently appears as one of the top reasons members request assistance from our Department of Patient Safety and Risk Management.

Our data demonstrate that, despite best efforts, it may become necessary to end patient relationships that are no longer therapeutic or appropriate based on patient behaviors or financial factors. It is critical, however, that the practitioner end the relationship in a manner that will not lead to claims of discrimination or abandonment, litigation for alleged professional negligence, or complaints to administrative agencies (for example, the state licensing board or the Office for Civil Rights).

Preventive Strategies

Prior to terminating a patient relationship, consider addressing the underlying reasons for ending the relationship, including noncompliant/nonadherent conduct, mental competency, health literacy, language or cultural barriers, or financial restraints. (For strategies to address these concerns, read our articles “Nonadherent and Noncompliant Patients: Overcoming Barriers” and “Patient Relations: Anticipate and Address Challenging Situations.”)

One effective approach to enhancing patient compliance and decreasing the potential need to terminate the professional affiliation is to implement and enforce a Conditions of Treatment Agreement, which is signed by all individuals at the beginning of the relationship. The document should clearly detail the practitioner’s expectations and indicate that repeated incidents of nonadherence may result in discharge from the practice. Posting the conditions on the practice website helps to emphasize the importance of following the requirements. (For additional recommendations, see our article “Proactively Manage Patient Expectations With a Conditions of Treatment Agreement.”)

Termination Criteria

If efforts to rehabilitate the relationship are not appropriate or are unsuccessful, it is generally appropriate to end a relationship under the following circumstances:

Treatment nonadherence: The patient does not follow the treatment plan or the terms of a pain management contract or discontinues medication or therapy regimens before completion.

Follow-up noncompliance: The patient repeatedly cancels follow-up visits or fails to keep scheduled appointments with practitioners or consultants.

Office policy noncompliance: The patient fails to observe office policies, such as those implemented for prescription refills or appointment cancellations, or refuses to adhere to mandated infection-control precautions.

Verbal abuse or violence: The patient, a family member, or a third-party caregiver is rude, uses disparaging or demeaning language, or sexually harasses office personnel or other patients, visitors, or vendors; exhibits violent or irrational behavior; makes threats of physical harm; or uses anger to jeopardize the safety and well-being of anyone present in the office.

Display of firearms or weapons: The patient, a family member, or a third-party caregiver threatens practice operations by wielding a firearm or weapon on the premises. Office staff may need to contact law enforcement promptly for support to help ensure that the situation does not escalate.

Inappropriate or criminal conduct: The patient exhibits inappropriate sexual behavior toward practitioners or staff or participates in drug diversion, theft, or other criminal conduct involving the practice.

Nonpayment: The patient owes a backlog of bills and has declined to work with the office to establish a payment plan or has discontinued making payments that had been agreed previously.

Exceptions and Special Circumstances

A number of circumstances may require additional steps or a delay before ending the patient relationship. Examples include the following situations:

- If the patient is in an acute phase of treatment, delay ending the relationship until the acute phase has passed. For example, if the patient is in the immediate postoperative stage or is in the process of a diagnostic workup, it is not advisable to terminate the relationship.
- If the practitioner is the only source of medical or dental care within a reasonable driving distance, care may need to continue until other arrangements can be made.
- When the practitioner is the only source of specialized medical or dental care, treatment may need to continue until the patient can be safely transferred to another practitioner who is able to provide appropriate care and follow-up.
- If the patient is a member of a prepaid health plan, the practitioner must communicate with the third-party payer to request the patient’s transfer to another practitioner or otherwise comply with the specific terms of the payer-practitioner agreement.
- If a patient is pregnant. During the first trimester: End the relationship only if it is an uncomplicated pregnancy and the patient has time to find another practitioner. During the second trimester: only for uncomplicated pregnancies and only if the patient transfers to another practitioner prior to cessation of services. During the third trimester: only under extreme circumstances, such as illness of the practitioner.

Effect a safe transition by working with the risk manager of the facility where delivery is scheduled. Provide timely and accurate documentation in the medical record of the situation.

Certain situations prohibit patient dismissal:

- Patients may not be dismissed or discriminated against based on limited English proficiency or status within a protected category under federal or state legislation, including race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age. Examples of laws prohibiting discrimination—which carry significant civil and administrative penalties for violations—include the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Civil Rights Act, and the Affordable Care Act. (The Department of Health and Human Services outlines requirements for practitioners regarding nondiscrimination policies and notices.)
- A patient's disability cannot be the reason for terminating the relationship unless the patient requires care or treatment for the particular disability that is outside the expertise of the practitioner. Transferring care to a specialist who provides the particular care is a better and safer approach.

Steps for Withdrawing Care

Establish a written policy and procedure with a standardized process that addresses interventions prior to ending the relationship and the steps to take if it becomes necessary to dismiss the patient. Ensure that approvals for any patient dismissal go through practice leadership and the assigned practitioner. Medical or dental groups may consider dismissing a patient from the entire practice. This avoids an on-call situation that might require the practitioner who ended the relationship to treat the patient.

When the situation for dismissing the patient is appropriate, provide a formal written notice that states you are withdrawing care by a specific date and the patient must find another practitioner. Mail the written notice to the patient by both first-class and certified mail with a return receipt requested. (Both types of mailing are required in some states.) To promote optimal continuity of care, you may reassure the patient that you will be available to confer with the new provider.

Keep copies in the patient's medical or dental record of all the materials: the letter, the original certified mail receipt (showing that the letter was sent), and the original certified mail return receipt (even if the patient refuses to sign for the certified letter). Keep and file in the patient record any unopened envelopes that have been returned by the postal or other delivery service.

Elements of the Written Notice

Include the following information in the written notice:

Reason: Although stating a specific reason for ending the relationship is not required, it is acceptable to use the catchall phrase "inability to achieve or maintain rapport necessary to promote the trust critical to support an effective clinical relationship," state that "the therapeutic practitioner-patient relationship no longer exists," or assert that "the trust necessary to support the relationship has eroded beyond repair." If the reason for ending the relationship is patient noncompliance/

nonadherence, you may state it briefly and succinctly as well, along with your attempts to obtain patient compliance.

Effective date: Specify the effective date for ending the relationship and provide the patient with a reasonable amount of time to establish a relationship with another practitioner. Although 30 days from the date of the written notice is usually considered adequate, follow your state regulations. The relationship may be ended immediately under the following circumstances:

- The patient has ended the relationship. (Acknowledge this in writing with a letter from the practice.)
- The patient or a family member has threatened the practitioner or staff with violence or has exhibited threatening behavior.
- The patient participates in drug diversion, theft, or other criminal activity involving the practice.
- The patient exhibits inappropriate behavior or sexual misconduct toward the practitioner or staff.

Interim care provisions: Offer interim emergency care prior to the effective date. For emergency situations that cannot be appropriately handled in the office, refer the patient to an emergency department or instruct the patient to call 911.

Continued care provisions: Offer referral suggestions for continued care through medical or dental societies, nearby hospital referral services, community resources, or the patient's health plan network. Do not recommend another healthcare practitioner specifically by name.

Patient records: Offer to provide a copy of the office record to the new practitioner by enclosing a HIPAA-compliant authorization (to be returned to the office with the name and address of the new practitioner and the patient's signature). One exception is a psychiatric record, which may be offered as a summary in many jurisdictions in lieu of a full copy of the medical record.

Transition of care: Indicate your willingness to speak with the patient's new practitioner to help ensure a smooth transition and continuity of care.

Patient responsibility: Specify that the patient is personally responsible for all follow-up and for continued medical or dental care.

Medication refills: Explain that medications will be provided only up to the effective date that the relationship ends.

The final decision about ending a patient relationship belongs to the practitioner. The Doctors Company's Department of Patient Safety and Risk Management is ready to assist you. We can discuss patient dismissal issues, send you sample correspondence, or help you develop special letters for an individual situation. Contact your patient safety risk manager at (800) 421-2368.

The guidelines suggested here are not rules, do not constitute legal advice, and do not ensure a successful outcome. The ultimate decision regarding the appropriateness of any treatment must be made by each healthcare provider considering the circumstances of the individual situation and in accordance with the laws of the jurisdiction in which the care is rendered.

ARE YOU A LEE COUNTY WECARE PROVIDER?

by: Nancy Cote, WeCare Senior Manager

The United Way WeCare program has been partnering with healthcare professionals in Lee County for over 10 years, providing millions of dollars of donated medical care to our community's most vulnerable citizens. Participants are hardworking individuals who contribute to making our area a sought-after destination and include service staff at local restaurants, housekeepers in hotels, and landscapers, many of whom are typically not offered insurance through an employer. For those suddenly faced with a life-changing diagnosis, the unfathomable choice between putting food on the table for their family or paying for treatment is one our patients do not have to make thanks to the generosity of our participating WeCare volunteer providers.

The United Way WeCare program connects qualifying individuals with medical services free of charge through a network of volunteer providers including Lee Health and numerous physician corporate entities. WeCare has facilitated providers in processing charitable care for services such as Mohs surgery, total hip replacement, oncology care, and cataract surgeries. **In 2023, the program helped providers process over \$9 million worth of charitable care for residents of Lee, Hendry, and Glades counties.** Providers and their practice managers know that when a patient is in need, they can reach out to WeCare for assistance in processing their care under the program or refer them to providers who can see them as WeCare patients, ensuring that no patient feels lost while dealing with devastating medical conditions.

Contracted WeCare providers receive Sovereign Immunity for the care they provide to WeCare patients, as they are considered Volunteer Health Care Providers with the Department of Health. Additionally, providers receive Continuing Education credit for up to 25% of their continuing education requirement and can request that their biennial renewal fees be waived as active WeCare providers.

United Way's WeCare team is immensely grateful to the active volunteer providers for the care they have provided this year to over **300 active program participants**. As our community continues to grow, there is an urgent need to recruit more providers across all realms of specialized care.

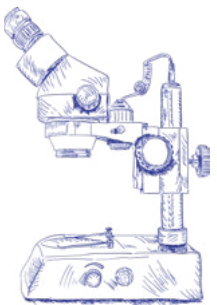
Discover how you can become a WeCare provider at www.UnitedWayLee.org/wecare today.



Nancy Cote with Jason Friedrichs,
MD of Collins Vision

DONATE YOUR MEDICAL ARTIFACTS

Have you noticed the historical displays at Gulf Coast Medical Center recently? The items include paraphernalia in Anesthesiology & Nursing (first floor), General Surgery (fourth floor), Cardiology (fifth floor) and total knee and hip prosthetics (sixth floor).



This collection is part of the **Museum of Medical History** at Florida Southwestern State College.

Museum Historian Jeff Elsberry, RRT-ACCS, PhD and Founder and Assistant Curator Jacob Goldberger, MD, FACS have reached out to LCMS and requested we remind members that they accept medical artifacts, documents, photos and memorabilia.

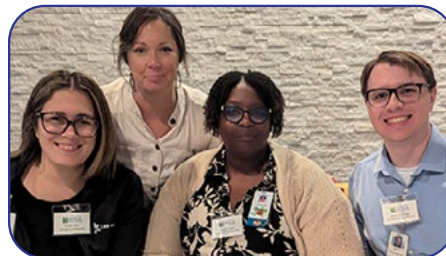
Any donation will receive a Transfer of Title document to support your tax deductible gift to the museum.

To make a donation, call Jeff Elsberry at (239) 489-9251 or Dr. Jacob Goldberger at (239) 851-4807.

For hours and tours, go to fsw.edu/museumofmedicalhistory

FALL PRACTICE ADMIN LUNCHEON

Over 35 Lee County medical practice administrators enjoyed lunch courtesy of LCMS on October 23rd at KJ's Steakhouse. This twice-yearly event provides an opportunity for your key office personnel to meet other like team members where they can learn from one another and grow their professional network.





Advances in Cardiology for Primary Care

4th Annual Naples Cardiovascular Summit

February 21-22, 2025

Arthrex One Conference Center | Naples, FL

Looking for premier CME opportunities? Attend the 4th Annual Naples Cardiovascular Summit and gain insights from leading cardiovascular experts while earning up to *13 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*.

In partnership with the University of Michigan Health, for primary care physicians, cardiologists, APPs, nurses, medical students, residents, techs, and first responders.

Scan the QR code to register.





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Bianca Ferrari, MD
Susanna Gaikazian, MD
Faithlore Gardner, MD
Lowell L. Hart, MD, FACP
Yasir Khan, MD*
Rebecca Kosloff, MD
Andy Lipman, MD

Michael J. McCleod, DO, FACOI
Frank Rodriguez, MD
Gregor A. Rodriguez, MD*
Silvia A. Romero, MD
Mark S. Rubin, MD
Ahsan Shah, MD
Gamini Soori, MD, MBA, FACP, FRCP, CPE
Gustavo Westin, MD*
Syed F. Zafar, MD

Providing care at:

Bonita Springs • Cape Coral Cancer Center • Cape Coral Cay West
Estero • Fort Myers Cancer Center • Fort Myers Colonial

**Joining Q4 2024*

FLCancer.com/LeeCounty

MAKING PHYSICIAN MENTAL WELLNESS A PRIORITY

The stigma is fading away. More physicians are taking advantage of the Lee County Medical Society Foundation's Physician Wellness Program (PWP) than ever before. In fact, so far this year, an average of eight physicians are receiving mental health counseling each month through our PWP partners.

LCMS does not receive any personal data on who is receiving counseling from its mental health partners. **The PWP is 100% confidential and free for LCMS members.** No insurance is billed and the visits are not reported to the Florida Medical Board. Find solutions to life difficulties including:

- Family issues/marriage/parenting
- Work-related difficulties/burnout
- Depression/anxiety/stress
- Suicidal thoughts

Help us keep the PWP strong in 2025! As you make a list of your year-end charity gifts, please consider adding the Physician Wellness Program. Donations are tax deductible (consult your accountant). The LCMS Foundation is a 501©3. Tax ID: 81-4328651. Donate at <https://lcmsfl.org/foundation>

CME DAY: REQUIRED TRAINING FOR EVERY PHYSICIAN

Get ready to satisfy your continuing medical education requirements at the LCMS' half-day CME educational event. Member and non-member physicians (MDs & DOs) can register for this annual training event which will include classes in:



- Prevention of Medical Errors (2 CE)
- Controlled Substances (2 CE)
- Domestic Violence (2 CE)
- Medical Ethics (1 CE)

CME Half-Day Training Event

Saturday January 11, 2025
8:00am - noon
Doubletree at Bell Tower
Earn 7 CME credits

Participation includes continental breakfast and snack breaks. Be sure to bring your CE Broker account name and password so staff can report your credits for you after the event.

Register at <https://lcmsfl.org/events>.

A large, two-story white house with a brown roof, surrounded by lush greenery and palm trees under a blue sky. The house has a prominent front porch and a balcony. The landscaping is well-maintained with various trees and shrubs.

LUXURY LIVING

NEAR LEE COUNTY HOSPITAL

HURRICANE SANCTUARY

Bruce S. Preble
239-537-5299
Licensed Florida Real
Estate Broker —
Commercial Realty

6,800 SF, 3.09 ACRES, 5 BEDROOMS, 6.5 BATHS, LARGE PATIO WITH POOL, SAUNA, 100 KW GENERATOR, IMPACT WINDOWS, WELL & COUNTY WATER, NEW ROOF 2020.



5781 Lee Boulevard, Suite 208-104
Lehigh Acres, FL 33971

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Midday Party

Thursday
December 5, 2024
6:00pm - 8:30pm

Burroughs Home & Gardens

Physician members can purchase
tickets at: lcmsfl.org/events