October 2022 member spotlight

Carlos R. Hamilton Jr., MD

President, Harris County Medical Society Retired Physicians Organization (RPO), 2022-2023

Specialty: Endocrinology

Former Professor of Medicine at the University of Texas McGovern Medical School

AMA Lifetime Member

Q: As you begin your term as President of the Retired Physician Organization of Harris County, Texas, can you tell us how the group got started and how many members there are currently?
A: The Retired Physicians Organization (RPO) of the Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) was created to enhance the social and cultural aspects of the lives of retired physicians and their spouses who wish to maintain contact with colleagues and the medical community. This remains the priority of the organization which has grown from a casual group of physician friends who met for lunch on a regular basis, to later, when HCMS took the group in as an official organization for retired physicians.

The group consists of close to 600 dues-paying retired physicians. HCMS provides the infrastructure such as collecting dues, maintaining our accounting records and activities, mailing our monthly newsletter and notifying us of new members and those that have deceased. The time spent by a dedicated staff member is paid from our dues as are the mailing and IT expenses.

Q: How is your group governed and what types of activities does the group participate in?

A: The club is governed by an executive committee consisting of past-presidents and the current officers. We meet monthly except for December (we have a festive holiday event), April (we have a “field trip” usually to some artistic, historical or cultural destination) and August (too hot and many on vacation!). In the past we have had a speaker provide the hour of ethics instruction required for medical license renewal but that has been discontinued as many have elected to not renew and the TMA provides many excellent choices online to their members without charge.

Prior to COVID-19, we had 100 attendees attend monthly and during the pandemic our meetings were held via Zoom with great attendance. In the past year, we had combined in-person/Zoom meetings and the attendance has remained about the same, but with one-half still attending by Zoom. As we have some members that are out-of-town and unable to physically attend, we plan to continue this hybrid meeting format. Our meetings are held at a private club which provides an appropriate dining space, a served luncheon (chef’s choice but always quite good!), valet parking and some items as needed by the speaker such as microphones and a projection screen. The current cost is $35 per person and many attendees bring their spouses.

Q: How does the organization provide social and fellowship opportunities for senior physician members? Do you have committees and speakers planned for the coming year?

A: Speakers for the meetings are selected by a Steering Committee and frequent member polls indicate that their topic preferences are currently historical presentations, scientific issues and travel. However, religious and political topics are excluded! In additions to our regular meetings, there are groups of members that meet at their preference as bridge players, a book club and a writer’s workshop. We also have a committee that helps members connect with non-profit service entities as volunteers.

URL: https://www.ama-assn.org/member-groups-sections/senior-physicians/sps-member-profile-carlos-r-hamilton-jr-md

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One of the most frequented activities is serving as docents or volunteers at the Museum of Health and Medical Science (affiliated with HCMS), and a primary source of health information for our community, especially for school children. Others serve as Scouting Merit Badge counselors for health-related topics.

Q: Does your group advocate at the federal and state levels on key health care issues impacting patients and physicians? And, is your group affiliated with other educational institutions to advance its mission?

A: The RPO is not affiliated with other societies and has never participated in advocacy with elected officials although some of our members have been involved in political and public policy activities. They were instrumental in achieving tort reform and HMO regulatory legislation in past decades.

These successes were due to the ability to build coalitions of legislators, both Republican and Democrat. Sadly, the political environment has changed ... and many of us, at our age, do not have interest in confrontation in lieu of results that could enhance the ability of the medical profession to provide high quality care for our patients. If the latter is one's goal—the only way to achieve it is by developing coalitions representing a spectrum of business activities and the social and ethnic segments of our population who share these goals with the medical profession.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of sharing with you the activities of the Retired Physician Organization of Harris County, Texas!