

Waterbury Medical Association

A Message from the WMA President James Finn, MD

With the pandemic winding down we are all watching in awe as one of the most important events in the history of medicine is playing out before us, the result of research coalescing in multiple fields. While this terrible disease has tried to separate us over the past year, our knowledge of the basic building blocks of life is now working to bring us back together through vaccines, while our use of bits and bytes has kept us electronically connected.

So, while some forces try to separate us, others draw us back together. The same is true of physician communities which are becoming fragmented. The Waterbury Medical Association, now 164 years old, is a unifying force, dedicated to promoting harmony among its members while working for the betterment of health in the community. Your continued membership and attendance at our functions help us carry out our mission.

Jim Finn





Nursing Scholarship Awarded to NVCC Student

We are proud to announce the establishment of the Waterbury Medical Association Scholarship for a nursing student entering the second (last) year at Naugatuck Valley Community College School of Nursing. This year's winner is Brooke Miglio, who was chosen because of her high level of motivation and academic performance. In her personal statement she remarked, "being able to serve my community would be the greatest reward of it all."

Among the top-rated nursing schools in Connecticut, the School of Nursing maintains a first-time licensure pass rate of 98 percent and at least 50 percent of graduates enroll in programs to advance their degree to BSN or MSN.



**WMA works to give
back to the
community in
Waterbury**

Pandemic Relief

Responding to the strong need for food donations this past winter the Association made a major donation to St. Vincent DePaul to purchase food for holiday meals.



WMA Golf Club Update

14 Years and Going Strong

The 2021 WMA Golf Club season marks the 14th year since the group was founded in 2008. Our first event this year was on June 1st at Fairview Farms Golf Course in Harwinton. We had a great round with perfect weather followed by dinner and drinks on the outdoor terrace. Since our group was small, everyone walked away with a raffle prize!

Our second event this season is scheduled for Tuesday, July 13th at The Farmington Country Club. We have played this course every year for the past 8 years. Thank you to Geoff Manton, M.D. for once again hosting and putting together another fantastic event.

Our third event is tentatively scheduled for August 11th at the Country Club of Waterbury. This event will follow our usual format: lunch, range, golf with carts, dinner and prizes.

Tee times begin at 1pm. Anyone interested in playing, please reach out to me for details.

Our final event is still up in the air. The tentative dates are September 21st or October 5th. I will be working on the details for this venue over the next month. For now, save those dates!

Hit them straight and hit them long.
Be well,

Neil Schiff, M.D.
Chair, Public Relations Committee



2021 Legislative Wrap Up

The 2021 legislative session was a year like no other. With the pandemic looming, the General Assembly embarked on a wild ride of a totally virtual session. No one except legislators and key staff were allowed in the building, and all new procedures were put in place in order for the public to participate in the legislative process. The proceedings were broadcast on YouTube and CT-News Network and legislators were seen voting from their offices, homes, and in some cases their cars throughout various parts of the year. Huge issues were tackled and public hearing testimony was cut off at 24 hours, the likes of which had never been seen inside the walls of the legislative office building. In addition, the General Assembly grappled with the budget and how to spend billions of Federal dollars that arrived under the American Rescue Plan. In the end, much was accomplished but everyone is looking forward to an in person legislative process next year.

Major issues that shaped the session were the legalization of recreational marijuana, the removal of the non-medical exemption for vaccines, mental health and addiction response, and telehealth. Each of these issues required an immense amount of work and sparked long debate, but in the end made it across the finish line to the Governor's desk. Next session will see the return of a public option for health care, a health insurance tax, and equity and equal justice for citizens of color, as well as many other issues that did not emerge this year. Bills that passed the General Assembly that have impact on the medical community are below.

HB 6423 AAC Immunizations

This bill eliminates the religious exemption from immunization requirements for individuals attending (1) public and private schools, including higher education institutions, and (2) child care centers and group and family day care homes. Under current law, individuals may opt out of vaccination if they present a statement that immunization would be contrary to their religious beliefs or, for minors, those of their parent or guardian. The bill grandfathers in individuals enrolled in grades kindergarten or higher who submitted a religious exemption prior to the bill's passage. It continues to grandfather these students if they transfer to another public or private school in the state (i.e., a primary or secondary school).



2021 Legislative Wrap Up

Under the bill, individuals with prior religious exemptions who are enrolled in pre-kindergarten or other preschool programs generally must comply with immunization requirements by September 1, 2022, or within 14 days after transferring to a different public or private program, whichever is later. However, the bill allows these children to extend the timeframe within which they must comply with the immunization requirements if they present a written declaration from the child's physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse that an alternative immunization schedule is recommended. The bill also retains current law's medical exemption from these immunization requirements for individuals who can document that the immunization is medically contraindicated.

HB 5596 AAC Telehealth

This bill modifies requirements for the delivery of telehealth services and insurance coverage of these services until June 30, 2023. Among other things, it:

1. expands the types of health providers authorized to provide telehealth services;
2. allows certain telehealth providers to provide telehealth services using audio-only telephone, which current law prohibits;
3. allows certain telehealth providers to use additional information and communication technologies in accordance with federal requirements (e.g., certain third-party video communication applications, such as Apple Facetime);
4. authorizes the Department of Public Health (DPH) commissioner to temporarily modify, waive, or suspend certain regulatory requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect the public health;
5. establishes requirements for telehealth providers seeking payment from uninsured or underinsured patients;
6. requires insurance coverage for telehealth services and prohibits providers reimbursed for services from seeking payment from an insured patient beyond cost sharing; and
7. prohibits (a) insurance policies from excluding coverage for a telehealth platform selected by an in-network provider and (b) carriers from reducing reimbursement to a provider because services are provided through telehealth instead of in-person.

Additionally, the bill permits physicians and advanced practice registered nurses to certify a qualifying patient's use of medical marijuana and provide follow-up care using telehealth if they comply with other statutory certification and recordkeeping requirements. They may do so notwithstanding existing laws, regulations, policies, or procedures on medical marijuana certifications. Lastly, the bill makes a conforming change to a law requiring telehealth providers who are prescribing practitioners to issue prescriptions electronically.