

December 2003

Dear Fellow Arizona Chapter Member:

This short year-end missive is intended to summarize some of the major issues ACC has faced both nationally, and in Arizona in 2003. I must begin by acknowledging the efforts of your councilors who have generously given of their time for our organization.

We have endeavored to rekindle a combined educational meeting with our annual chapter meeting to bring us together as colleagues in this demanding and rapidly changing specialty. Everyone with whom I talked felt that our gathering in the Hilton in Sedona on October 17-19 was a success, and a good start in establishing a yearly event with provocative speakers, lively discussion, and time to socialize. Please pencil in time in October 2004, exact date to be announced, for next year's event.

The minutes of the Board of Councilor's Meeting are posted on the website at www.acc-az.org. Many have volunteered for the Speaker's Bureau, which will now be marketed to social and medical organizations. We are also exploring involvement in the public dissemination of Automatic External Defibrillators, especially in schools. ACC is striving to establish the National Cardiovascular Data Registry as the gold standard in assessing quality in the cath lab, and we hope to encourage participation in all cath labs in Arizona. The attention of the State Legislature remains thankfully, focused away from medical issues at present, but the kind of malpractice insurance woes, and regulatory issues facing other states may well be headed towards Arizona. At our Sedona meeting, we heard from a real friend of physicians in Arizona, State Senator Dr. Robert Cannell, who challenged us to become involved in the political and legislative process.

As you know, the Medicare Reform Act, just signed by President Bush includes a small but welcome rollback of the yearly cuts in Medicare reimbursement. A modest 1.5% increase is projected rather than a 4.5% cut, and our specialty may fare somewhat better. The newly formed ACC PAC played a major role in an alliance with other specialty groups, and ACC was specifically mentioned both by President Bush, and by Majority Leader Senator Bill Frist, in promoting this legislation. Although cuts have been averted for 2004 and 2005, a draconian "pay-back" looms in 2006 if fundamental changes in the arcane payment formula are not made. Hence, there remains much work undone! Medical Liability Insurance reform was defeated this year in the U.S. Senate, but the issue is at least finally being discussed. **I STRONGLY** urge each of you to donate \$100 to the ACC-PAC to help fight for this cause and the many others ahead. A contribution form is included with this mailing for your convenience.

I hope you voted in the recently held "on-line" balloting for the next Governor; it is my pleasure to congratulate Tucson area councilor Dr. Doug Morrison, who will take the baton in March 2005. We will be holding elections next March to select a new slate of councilors to replace the one-third whose terms will expire. I would strongly encourage each of you with an interest in making cardiovascular care in Arizona better to contact me at pmaki@bcardiology.com.

Finally, I would like to wish you and your families a healthy and safe holiday, and a very happy 2004.

Sincerely



Peter C. Maki, MD
President