

**American Academy of Physician Assistants in Legal Medicine  
BOARD MEETING Teleconference**

**September 13, 2010**

**6:30pm CST**

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:35. The following members identified themselves as present:

Jeff Nicholson: President - Wisconsin  
Larry Collins: Vice-president - Florida  
Marsha Niven: Secretary - Texas  
Attila Nyilas: Membership Director - Pennsylvania  
Marcos Vargas: CME director, Newsletter Editor - Michigan  
Rick Hillegas: Director at Large - Tennessee  
Melisa Moncure – Treasurer - Texas

Not in attendance: Arturo Armendiraz, Director at Large (California) who has also agreed to act as student outreach liaison.

Jeff introduced the members of the board and each member gave a quick synopsis of their background and careers and why they are currently involved in AAPALM. For the purpose of the meeting minutes, we will bypass the information shared because Marcos has requested that short bios and pictures to be placed in the newsletter.

#### HISTORY OF AAPALM

Jeff shared with the group the short growing history of AAPALM. Jim Carey and Monty Carey (not related) were two founding officers in the organization about 7-8 years ago. Jeff Nicholson joined the organization about 3 years ago and during that time the organization has grown from about 20 members to its current membership of 70. AAPALM Board members have traditionally been speakers on malpractice and risk management at AAPA conferences. Jeff spoke at the 2010 AAPA National Convention on common pitfalls for PA's and risk management issues. Jeff is also currently scheduled to speak at several state groups. Although Jeff wants to remain very active in the organization (as President), Jim Carey and Monty Carey are ready to pass on the torch and did not seek re-election in the last elections. Marcos took this opportunity to praise Jeff for the tireless work he has done for the organization over the last 3 years.

Jeff explained that the goal of the most recent survey was to identify issues significant to current AAPALM members and to establish some demographic information.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Jeff further reaffirmed the AAPALM Mission Statement as noted on the website is to *Provide education on malpractice liability and risk management to AAPA members and the medical community with an emphasis on the provision of safe medical care for all patients.*

Jeff brought up the misconception that the AAPALM had been seen as a ‘good old boys network’ for sequestering referrals from lawyers that had been funneled through the AAPA. That led to a round table discussion and good agreement that as an organization we should be concentrating on educating PA’s and reinforcing the reduction of risks in actual clinical practice. This led to the clarification of the AAPALM Mission Statement last year. Marcos emphasized the need to spread the message to PA students in their academic programs. Rick and Jeff agreed that academia is significantly deficient in training in the areas of risk management and preventing malpractice as it addresses PA’s in clinical practice.

Rick asked about advertisement to attorneys and other PA’s concerning our mission statement, specifically promoting the purchase of the database of currently available on the website. Jeff reaffirmed that AAPALM members do NOT give legal advisement, but that e-mails have been sent to all members of AAPA, notifying them of the existence of AAPALM and specifically, if they have concerns with licensure or practice employment certification issues (not necessarily malpractice issues) to contact AAPALM. This led to the discussion that Jeff has been working very hard to try to establish contacts with attorneys in each and every state that the organization could refer PA’s with those types of practice issues to consult.

**Jeff identified this as a project for a task force in the future.** He suggested that each BOD member contact and identify attorneys in their local area and Marcos agreed that this is a project that should be addressed this year.

Marcos recommended that all AAPALM members and specifically the BOD members become more active in their community and give educational talks, write articles in newsletters and contact local PA groups and state organizations. Pre-prepared lectures are available in-house on the website. These are presentations that Rick and Monty have used in the past for just such outreach programs. Marcos suggested that the organization establish a **speaker’s bureau** of members who would be willing to make such presentations with the pre-scripted presentations already available, for circuit presentations. Marcos agreed to explore this area and provide Rick a list of CME vendors and venues for presentations.

## AAPALM and the PA community

Rick brought up the issue of territory and competition among the different PA groups, suggesting surveying PA’s and other PA organizations as to their interests and their reception to hearing from us. Rick emphasized the need for exposure to these groups and requested Melisa’s input from her unique position as both an attorney and a new PA. Melisa agreed to think about it and also offered to act as a contact person for attorney

referrals since she herself does not feel comfortable in the role of an expert witness since she has been out of PA school for less than 1 year.

The discussion then turned to putting on our own program (like an entire day long seminar or CME offering) but Rick verbalized the need to get enough talks and smaller programs together before we can “put on our own show”.

## SURVEY RESULTS

Jeff then discussed the survey of AAPALM members conducted this past summer, item by item.

Question #4 addressed ethical guidelines. The survey question involved whether AAPALM members will abide by the established AAPA ethical guidelines. Currently, our bylaws require that a **fellow member** must be a member of AAPA, so, **Jeff requested that we clarify the description of membership categories.** AAPALM is NOT a constituent organization, it is a special interest organization. Jeff further clarified that the Ethical Guidelines statement refers to PA’s acting as an expert witness and are NOT practice standards. **The group agreed that new members agree to these ethical guidelines before they pay for their memberships.** Marcos indicated this could be accomplished by a drop down check box on the application page of the website.

Question #5 addressed whether we should have a contact person or direct referrals to the website and encourage attorneys to buy the AAPALM directory for \$300. **The consensus of the group was that the most neutral approach was to direct AAPALM referrals to the website and have them purchase of the directory. That way the entire membership would benefit and there would be no impression of favoritism.** Melissa also offered to serve as the contact person since she is not interested in acting as an expert witness with less than 1 year of clinical practice.

Questions #6 & #7 addressed members participating in educational and outreach programs. **After much discussion the consensus was that this should be mandatory for BOD members and encouraged for all members of AAPALM, and that this should be included in the application process.**

Questions #8 & #9 concerned the amount of annual dues. **Consensus agreed to raise the fee to \$50.**

Question #10 concerned the newsletter. After much discussion, Rick requested specific input from Melisa concerning what information on the website should be *free* to attorneys for their education, and what information should be password protected to promote the attorneys to purchase a database.. Melisa suggested an “attorney tab” that could address questions specific to attorneys while not giving away the store. Jeff reminded us that much of that information can be found on the AAPALM website under the current heading of FAQ’s. **Marcos suggested that a**

**couple of samples of the newsletter be available for those considering membership, but only a few and that the rest including the most recent newsletter, be password protected. Consensus agreed.**

#### WRAP UP

As we were wrapping up the meeting Marco reported he would be sending the BOD templates for bios and request jpeg photos for the newsletter so the membership could 'get to know' the BOD.

No specific date identified for the next meeting or teleconference.

#### **ITEMS REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ACTION:**

1. Clarification of the description of membership categories as currently identified on the AAPALM website. – Jeff agreed to address this
2. Establish a speakers bureau for circuit presentations using pre-scripted programs already available on the website. Marcos agreed to explore this.
3. Raise the membership dues to \$50/year.
4. Establish a database of attorneys (at least one from each state) who are familiar with PA's and who provide the service of representing PA's who are having employment, certification or licensure problems (referring to question #11 of the survey). A task for needs to be identified for this project, including active participation of each and every BOD members. Larry Collins agreed to spearhead this.
5. Establish an "attorney's tab" on the website to provide information specific to attorneys considering using PA's in their practice. This tab would also direct attorneys to purchase the AAPALM directory as a method of referral. As website editor, Jeff agreed to do this.

Respectfully submitted,

Marsha Niven  
AAPALM Secretary