

# MSSC NEWS

## HIGHLIGHTS 2022

A LOOK BACK AT THE 2022 NEWS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF SEDGWICK COUNTY AND ITS PROGRAMS UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT JEANNE KROEKER, MD.

### MSSC celebrates year with Docs at Doc

A large number of physicians attended MSSC's annual meeting on Dec. 6 at Doc Hangar. The Docs at Doc event was an opportunity to celebrate the year with colleagues and learn more about the restored B-29 Superfortress housed in the hangar.

In addition to remembering MSSC members who died during the year and approving next year's MSSC budget, MSSC President Jeanne Kroeker, MD, presented a five-year review of MSSC's finances and operations. She also announced that Colleen

Loo-Gross, MD, was the 2023 recipient of the Dr. Joe Meek Young Physician Leadership Award.

Frank Berry, a volunteer and historian with Doc's Friends, the nonprofit organization that owns and operates Doc, shared the story of how the airplane sat in the Mojave Desert for 42 years before being rescued and transported to Wichita. It now flies all over the country to air shows and educational events.

Dr. Kroeker closed the meeting by thanking MSSC members for the skilled and compassionate care they provide and wishing everyone a blessed holiday season.



### MSSC made gains during past five years



**E. Jeanne Kroeker, MD**  
December President's Message

Normally, MSSC presidents provide an annual report in the December MSSC News. But rather than review only 2022, I thought it would be valuable to look back over the past five years to assess MSSC's trajectory and progress over time.

The MSSC board of directors has a responsibility to be good stewards of MSSC and its resources. It has a duty to preserve and build on the foundation that others laid. And that includes the literal foundation.

Though the Medical Society built and maintained its office building on South Hillside, we didn't own the land it sat upon. What's more, when the long-term land lease expired, which was scheduled for 2030, the building owner-

ship would revert to the landowner, not to the MSSC.

Four years ago we were able to buy the land. We then felt better about updating the building, which had been stuck in the 1980s. We remodeled nearly every office on a very limited budget, doing much of the work ourselves. We also replaced part of the roof and did quite a bit of landscaping around the building. This included adding a Keeper of the Plains statue to commemorate the work of our medical community combating COVID-19.

#### **Finances, membership**

Another big stewardship responsibility is managing MSSC's finances. During the past five years, MSSC has significantly improved its finances by diversifying revenue and controlling costs.

PLEASE SEE **KROEKER**, PAGE 2

#### December 2022 Special Edition

Founded in 1903, MSSC today numbers more than 1,700 members, including residents and students, and is considered one of the most active county medical societies in the country.





## KROEKER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Also of note, we didn't raise our dues rate: It's still \$355. What's more, unlike five years ago, most of our membership events now are free or at a minimal cost.

Speaking of members, five years ago, membership had dropped and been on a downward trajectory. We were first able to stabilize, then slowly build back up. It now tops 1,035 active members, not counting students, residents or retired members.

Attendance at our membership meetings also increased significantly. Meetings have been on timely topics, such as opioids and vaping, or have been community focused, such as the event this past May at WSU's Koch Arena, in September at the new osteopathic medical school, and the annual meeting this month at Doc Hangar.

Another important membership initiative was the creation of Wichita Docs Under 40. It has helped connect young physicians with MSSC and with each other. We've had a variety of WD40 events, including a Doctors' Day gathering this past March at a brewery and a concert and fireworks show at Bradley Fair that welcomed new residents.

### Communications, COVID-19

One way to expand our reach and audience is social media. We've significantly increased our social media following, particularly on Facebook. In fact, we now have more Facebook followers than many medical societies in major cities.

We also redid our website. And we've had many columns published in The Eagle and interviews in the Wichita Business Journal.

We've also improved the quality and size of the MSSC newsletter, including publishing a magazine to document COVID-19, and we've increased email communications and updates with physicians and practice managers.

Speaking of COVID-19, I'm proud of how MSSC helped physicians and our community. Some of this work included forming a committee of physicians to advise the county and other physicians, leading a PPE donation drive, arranging for our members to have priority testing for COVID, and helping organize and promote vaccine drives.

We also filmed public service announcements about masking and vaccinations, organized mental health support for physicians and staff, and provided meals to the staffs at the COVID units at the hospitals.

### Initiatives, advocacy

We also have worked on existing initiatives and priorities. We continued supporting end-of-life planning, maternal and infant health, and surgical quality improvement.

We've been working on increasing the number of Black physicians, an initiative we named this year after the Brown family. We

had physicians speak to local elementary, middle and high schools in the Wichita school district about the medical profession. We are also working on forming physician mentorships with Black medical students and residents.

MSSC has been working to help physicians who may be experiencing burnout or COVID-related trauma. During the pandemic, we organized therapists and psychiatrists who were willing to see physicians and their staff. This year, we added a free teletherapy option for MSSC members.

We've continued our advocacy work with KMS and the AMA. We've had significant successes during the past five years in advancing legislation that aided the practice of medicine and in preventing many other bills that could have harmed it, though the new APRN law this year was a big disappointment.

### Ongoing work, subsidiaries

We've continued the regular work of MSSC, including practice support, physician referrals (MSSC did about 500 this year), loans to medical students, and operating the Pharmacy Fraud Hotline.

I'll also note that we approved major revisions of the MSSC bylaws. These included, believe it or not, eliminating references to physicians only as male. Needless to say, that was long overdue.

Our subsidiary and affiliated organizations also have done great work during the past five years. These include Project Access, ProviDRs Care, Medical Provider Resources (MPR), and Health ICT. We've also added several new public health initiatives or organizations, including the Kansas Business Group on Health and the Health & Wellness Coalition.

### Past and the future

Next year, MSSC will celebrate its 120th year. Thanks in part to the hard work and gains of the past five years, we will enter next year on a stable foundation and will continue to build on MSSC's strong legacy.

It's been an honor to serve as MSSC president this past year and to work with so many outstanding and caring physicians. I look forward to what the future holds for MSSC and our community.



**JEANNE KROEKER, MD, IS RECOGNIZED FOR HER SERVICE BY MSSC PRESIDENT-ELECT MAURICE DUGGINS, MD, AT THE ANNUAL MEETING ON DEC. 6.**



# PHYSICIAN ENGAGEMENT

PHYSICIANS AND THEIR GUESTS GATHERED AT THE DOC HANGAR ON DEC. 6 FOR THE MSSC ANNUAL MEETING FEATURING TOURS OF THE OLD WARPLANE.



▲ LYNN FISHER, MD, AMANDA RANEY, MD, ANH NGUYEN, MD, TESSA ROHRBERG, MD, NATHAN PFEIFER, MD, AND NIKKI BROWN



▲ HOWARD CHANG, MD, MIKE NGUYEN, DO, AND TONY SUN, MD



▲ GAROLD MINNS, MD, AND PAUL UHLIG, MD



▲ ASHLEY ROBBINS, MD, AND JENNIFER THUENER, MD



▲ SUSIE BRAUN AND BILL BRAUN, MD



▲ JEANNE KROEKER, MD, AND NOEL SANCHEZ, MD



▲ HASSAN ZBEEB, MS2, NAZEEN MORELLI, MS2, DANIA JUMPA, MS2, LIPILEKHA MUKHERJEE, MS2, LIEU NGUYEN, MS2, CHASE BRANSTETTER, MS4, AND PAUL UHLIG, MD



▲ NEIL HAGUE, MELISSA HAGUE, MD, ROSALIE FOCKEN, MD, AND ANDREW BELIEL



▲ ANDY FERNANDEZ AND CARMELITA ALVARES, MD



▲ NADINE NORTON AND ROBERT NORTON, MD



▲ ROD JONES, MD, AND KRISTIE BALL, RN



▲ RICK KELLERMAN, MD, AND DANIEL CALIENDO, MD



▲ DONNA SWEET, MD, AND MAURICE DUGGINS, MD



▲ STEEN MORTENSEN, MD, AND JETTE MORTENSEN



▲ KIM KROHN, MD, AND JOHN FISHPAW, DDS



# Newsworthy ▶▶

## Highlights from 2022

### COVID waned but didn't disappear in 2022

This year began with a wave of COVID-19 patients in Wichita hospitals – more than 95% of whom were unvaccinated. The surge wreaked havoc in crowded emergency departments and strained hospital staff.

By mid-January, Wesley and Ascension hospitals reached record numbers of COVID-19 patients. Sedgwick County's 14-day average positive test rate also reached the highest level since the start of the pandemic.

But then a dramatic decline began. The number of COVID patients dropped from 294 on Jan. 24 to 98 on Feb. 21, and it continued to drop.

Health officials worried that the highly transmissible omicron variant could result in another large wave. Though many people became infected, hospitalizations were low – and remained comparatively low throughout the summer and fall. In August, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention relaxed its COVID guidelines, including lifting the requirement to quarantine if exposed to the virus. Many medical practices dropped masking requirements.

Hospitals continued to face challenges, however. A shortage of nurses and support staff meant that some emergency department patients faced long waits to be transferred to an available bed. The challenge increased in the fall, as RSV cases rose dramatically and flu returned – causing health officials to worry that a rebound of COVID could lead to a “tripledemic” this winter.



**JANUARY 2022:** WESLEY HEALTHCARE CMO LOWELL EBERSOLE, DO, PREPARES TO EMPTY TRASH AND RESTOCK SUPPLIES IN PATIENT ROOMS TO ASSIST OVERSTRESSED UNITS.

### Pandemic took toll on kids

Though COVID-19 hospitalizations declined dramatically during 2022, a morass of mental health conditions the pandemic left in its wake strained resources and overwhelmed physicians – especially when it came to children.

Emergency department visits across the country for mental health emergencies rose for children and adolescents. In addition, emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts increased nearly 51% among girls ages 12-17 in early 2021.

Compounding this problem was a lack of mental health professionals. According to national recommendations, Kansas should have 500-600 child psychiatrists. It has only about 60.

### MSSC adds free teletherapy for physicians

Early in the pandemic, MSSC organized a list of local therapists and psychiatrists willing to see physicians and their staff members. It expanded those resources this year by adding a teletherapy option.

MSSC partnered with The Battle Within and Frontline Therapy Network to offer teletherapy services to physicians. MSSC members can receive up to six free, confidential teletherapy sessions with a vetted therapist. MSSC also partnered with WorkWell KS to provide free resources for other health care team members.

### 2023 Meek young physician award announced

The Dr. Joe Meek Young Physician Leadership Award, named after the former longtime KUSM-Wichita dean, aims to foster leadership among practicing physicians 40 or younger.

Cassie Scriptor, MD, a family physician with Hillside Medical Office, was the recipient for 2022.

The 2023 recipient was announced at the MSSC annual meeting. Colleen Loo-Gross, MD, MPH, is a family physician with KUSM-W and has clinical practice sites at HealthCore Clinic, Wesley Family Medicine Clinic and Wesley Medical Center. She hopes the award will help deepen her understanding of how to be a strong physician leader advocating for our neighbors and making a difference across the community.



**DR. LOO-GROSS**

### War on Ukraine personal

For two MSSC physicians, Russia's war on Ukraine war has been personal. Nataliya Biskup, MD, and Sophia Zinkovsky, MD, were originally from Ukraine and still have family members there. “It truly is horrific to witness, especially as a physician whose total goal and purpose in life is to better and improve human life,” Dr. Biskup said.

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## MSSC creates Brown Family Fund

In honor of Val Brown, Sr., MD, who died in April at age 98, and in recognition of his family's three generations of physicians serving Wichita, the MSSC board of directors named its Black physician initiative after the Brown family.

The Brown Family Fund for Black Physician Recruitment focuses on recruiting and retaining more Black physicians in Wichita. MSSC donated \$10,000 to help launch the fund. Others who want to help support the initiative can make a tax-deductible donation to the fund via MSSC.



## Disappointing legislative session

After failing in many previous attempts, APRNs gained state approval in 2022 for loosening some practice requirements. The new law enables APRNs who have certain training to prescribe drugs without a collaborative practice agreement with physicians. It requires APRNs to purchase malpractice insurance but doesn't require that they be part of the Health Care Stabilization Fund.

In September, the Kansas State Board of Nursing approved regulations for the new law, despite concerns expressed by the Kansas Medical Society. KMS argued that the regulations should be clearer about how an APRN cannot make medical decisions or develop a medical plan of care for patients or clients. To do either, an APRN would need a collaborative agreement with a physician.

## MSSC meetings connect physicians



WUSHOCK AND CHADY SARRAF, MD

MSSC held two large membership meetings aimed at connecting physicians with each other and the community.

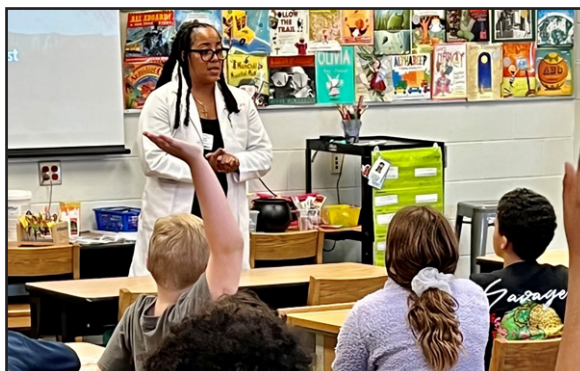
In May, MSSC met at Koch Arena at Wichita State University. WSU President Rick Muma spoke about the many changes to the WSU campus and programs. Men's basketball Coach Isaac Brown shared about his journey to WSU and the impact of the NCAA's "name, image and likeness" rule. MSSC members also were able to tour locker rooms and get their picture taken with WuShock.

In September, MSSC members met at the new Kansas College of Osteopathic Medicine. They heard from school leaders and toured the downtown facility.

## Docs visit area schools for Doctors' Day

Seventeen MSSC physicians and residents spoke to USD 259 students as part of national Doctors' Day in March. In past years these presentations have been to high school students only. This year MSSC expanded the outreach to include middle and elementary students.

MSSC focused on schools this year that had high percentages of students from populations underrepresented in medicine. The goal was to help students see that it can be possible for someone like them to become a doctor, nurse or other health care worker.



▲ REGAN DEHART, MD, AT JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN MARCH

## Black infant mortality increased in Kansas

Infant mortality data for Kansas released this year showed a substantial jump in Black infant mortality rates over 2019, blindsiding groups that work to increase infant survival rates across the state.

Rates of infant deaths among Black, non-Hispanic mothers increased 57.9% in 2020 over 2019 data. In general, infant mortality rates increased overall by 18.5% statewide in

2020 – not totally unexpected in the wake of COVID-19 and the access-to-care challenges the pandemic brought.

"This is upsetting enough, but the racial disparities are absolutely devastating," said Cari Schmidt, PhD, director of the Center for Research for Infant Birth and Survival (CRIBS), a KU School of Medicine-Wichita program, when the data was released in June.



## New DO school welcomes first class

The Kansas College of Osteopathic Medicine, the first DO school in the state of Kansas, welcomed its inaugural class of 91 students this summer.

The campus is situated in the historic Finney State Office Building and features a clean, open design, state-of-the-art technology and spacious learning spaces with an osteopathic skills training center, standardized patient teaching rooms, large lecture halls and small-group study rooms.

Next year, KansasCOM expects to admit 137 students into its program.



## KUSM-W, WSU propose complex

A new health science center to be shared by KU School of Medicine-Wichita, Wichita State University and WSU Tech took an important step forward in September when the Kansas Board of Regents voted unanimously to approve the project's program statement.

The schools are seeking to construct a \$302 million, 470,000-square-foot medical complex in the downtown corridor. The programs and clinics of KUSM-W, including the KU School of Pharmacy, and the health professions programs at WSU and WSU Tech would relocate to the new facility, which, if funding is secured, could be complete as early as fall 2026.

## MSSC hosts dinner for state lawmakers

MSSC hosted a dinner in November for state lawmakers from Sedgwick County. It was an opportunity for lawmakers and physicians to get to know each other better and to discuss issues relevant to health and health care in our community and state. Kevin Hoppock, MD, chairman of the MSSC Legislative Committee, noted how the lawmakers' constituents are patients of MSSC physicians. MSSC Executive Director Phillip Brownlee also spoke about the importance of Project Access.



▲ REP. BRENDA LANDWEHR AND RACHELLE COLOMBO, KANSAS MEDICAL SOCIETY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IN NOVEMBER.

## Fentanyl surges in county

Fentanyl overdoses are killing record numbers of Sedgwick County residents, setting physicians and first responders on edge.

In the last few years, the number of fentanyl overdose deaths in Sedgwick County has skyrocketed, from 98 in 2018 to 242 in 2021 with Sedgwick County on track to exceed 300 deaths this year, according to the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office.

At Ascension Via Christi's St. Francis ED, medical director Howard Chang, MD, estimates he's seeing two to three drug-related overdoses per 12-hour shift these days, double the number he fielded just two years ago.



DR. CHANG

## Doc embraces social media



Wichita psychiatrist Larry Mitnaul, MD, is part of a growing number of physicians embracing social media as a way to reach patients and dispense solid health and medical information. After posting videos on YouTube and Instagram for several years, Mitnaul expanded into TikTok.

Often using funny sound bites or a snippet of music, Mitnaul dispenses short mental health parenting nuggets and commiserates on topics such as when children should start doing chores and what happens when ADHD is left untreated.

"I can't tell you how many times people say, 'I'm surprised that 10-second video or that two-minute explanation is what I needed to hear,'" Mitnaul said. "It's been really wonderful."

## Young physicians gather

MSSC's Wichita Docs Under 40 (WD<40) group hosts mixers and other events for

young physicians to network and get involved as they navigate the practice and business of medicine. It held a Doctors' Day event at Central Standard Brewing in March and an event at Bradley Fair on June 30 to welcome new residents that included a concert and fireworks show.



DOCTORS

## MSSC 2022

# Affiliates and Initiatives ▶▶▶

### Health ICT

A selection of notable successes in 2022:

- Supported a Wichita pharmacy with establishing an accredited Diabetes Self-Management Education & Support (DSMES) program. Health ICT also supported a county healthy department in northeast Kansas, as well as a local diabetes management organization in Wichita.
- Provided or supported education to Kansas community health workers on team-based care approaches to chronic disease management, as well as continuous glucose monitoring.
- Supported a pilot project between Project Access and community health workers with Salud + Bienestar to offer the Healthy Heart Ambassador program, a self-measured blood pressure monitoring program intended to improve outcomes for patients with hypertension.

### Project Access

Project Access was awarded a second grant through THRIVE Allen County to focus on expanding enrollment in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Plan (CHIP). Project Access also hired a community health worker who focuses on improving health outcomes for clients of Project Access who have chronic health conditions including hyperlipidemia, hypertension, pre-diabetes and diabetes. Project Access continues to facilitate life-saving medical care and treatment, all due to the generosity of our medical community. Total donated care since inception is approaching \$250 million, and we've helped nearly 15,000 individuals.

### Kansas Business Group on Health

KBGH continued offering ongoing webinars highlighting different topics including health equity and ways to address obesity in a benefit plan, and issues involving the high cost of care. KBGH provided the latest information on Leapfrog survey results, employer responsibilities related to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, and more. KBGH continued quarterly HR Forums and semi-annual book clubs. KBGH remains steadfast in providing up-to-date information to members for a positive impact on their health care benefit plans.

### ProviDRs Care

ProviDRs Care had a busy year launching a subsidiary group health plan. Unified Health Plan is an integrated group health plan offering level-funded and partially self-funded options for employers with two or more employees. The plan went live on Oct. 1 for several employers with more coming on in January. ProviDRs Care also expanded its network footprint, adding seven hospitals in Arkansas, 16 in Missouri, eight hospitals in Oklahoma, and more than 2,000 providers across the three states.

### Medical Provider Resources

MPR entered the year with a projected net loss but ended the fiscal year in the positive. Provider enrollment services continue to be popular as the additional requirements of the No Surprises Act have become burdensome for many practices. MPR launched an online application that allows MPR to process initial appointment and reappointment applications faster and track document updates in a more efficient manner. MPR completed its three-year strategic plan adopted in 2019 with the exception of building a reserve, which will be a priority moving forward.

### TPOPP

The TPOPP program (Transportable Physician Orders for Patient Preferences) is designed to improve the quality of care people receive at the end of life. The Steering Committee meets at the MSSC offices. A new TPOPP form and clinical guide were updated in 2022. The new forms are available at the MSSC offices. For more information, visit [www.tpopppwichita.org](http://www.tpopppwichita.org).

### Health & Wellness Coalition

The Health & Wellness Coalition continues to collaborate and coordinate to promote physical activity and good nutrition for all generations living in the greater Wichita area. This work is promoted through monthly newsletters, partner emails, and hosting 10 successful Coalition meetings. The Food System Master Plan was adopted by the Wichita City Council and the Sedgwick County Commission at the beginning of 2022. The 17th annual Working Well Conference provided tangible ways to engage employees, reinforce best practices, and improve the worksite wellness plan.

### Maternal Infant Health Coalition

The mission of the MIHC – created in partnership with MSSC – is to improve maternal and infant health outcomes in Sedgwick County by assuring quality preconception and perinatal care and using data-driven, evidence-based practices and quality improvement processes. Throughout 2022, the MIHC met to review local data, learn about local programs and resources, and network. Participating organizations focused on providing service delivery including prenatal education, home visitation, mental health, safe sleep, tobacco cessation services, breastfeeding education and public safety.

### MSSC Medical Careers Loan Fund

MSSC provides subsidized low-interest student loans to local medical students and others seeking careers in the medical field. A committee reviews and approves the applications. No interest is charged on the loans while the students are in medical school. A small loan repayment begins during residency. MSSC also provides small, short-term emergency loans to students in need. More information about the loan program is available on the MSSC website, [mssconline.org](http://mssconline.org).

### Pharmacy Fraud Hotline

MSSC operates a local hotline for fraudulent prescriptions. Physician offices or pharmacies contact MSSC about a fraudulent script, and MSSC faxes an alert to more than 100 area pharmacies. The program supplements the state K-TRACS monitoring program.

### Chronic Disease Risk Reduction

MSSC received CDRR (Chronic Disease Risk Reduction grant from KDHE) funding to work toward improving health outcomes and creating healthier environments in Wichita and Sedgwick County. This year's priority projects focused on increasing the number of tobacco-free childcare facilities, advocating for tobacco-free parks and trails, recruiting and training behavioral health and other health professionals to provide better tobacco cessation treatment for patients, and assisting the Health & Wellness Coalition with successfully establishing a Wichita/Sedgwick County Food and Farm Council.



# MSSC NEWS

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## Thank you for your service

The Medical Society of Sedgwick County thanks the following physicians for serving on the MSSC Board of Directors in 2022:

**President:** E. Jeanne Kroeker, MD

**President-elect:** Maurice Duggins, MD

**Secretary:** Nassim Nabbout, MD

**Treasurer:** Amanda Valliant, MD

**Board members:**

Phillip Hagan, MD

Justin Moore, MD

Chady Sarraf, MD

Megan Dingwall, MD

Mark Laudenschlager, MD

Jennifer Thuener, MD

Stephanie Kuhlmann, DO

Katie Rosell, MD

Wassim Shaheen, MD

**MSSC also wants to congratulate incoming**

**board members:** Howard Chang, MD, president-elect; Diane Hunt, MD, secretary; Barry Bloom, MD, treasurer; and board members Shauna Kern, DO, Christina Nicholas, MD, and Ashley Robbins, MD.

