



Is Tomorrow's Health System Here Already?

**Annual convention connects
present to future**

by Michael F. Conlan

Photography by Michael DeFilippo



**Recharge.
Reimagine.
Reinvent.**



#NCPA2015



On the banks of the Potomac River, some 3,000 pharmacists, students, educators, and vendors convened at the NCPA Annual Convention to “recharge, reimagine, and reinvent” the business of independent community pharmacy. The Oct. 10–14, 2015 assembly was held at the Gaylord Resort in National Harbor, Md., just a few miles from the nation’s capital where, as NCPA President John T. Sherrer observed, “so much of NCPA’s identity has been forged.”

Sherrer’s farewell address at the First General Session was delivered in an emotional multi-media video necessitated by his ongoing recovery from a major stroke. “Six years ago, I began a journey I never expected and never asked

Editor’s Note: To view a gallery of convention photos, visit NCPA’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/commpharmacy.

NCPA & 2015 ANNUAL Convention



for...My entire life changed in the blink or an eye," he said. Evoking the spirit of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose "Little White House" in Warm Springs, Ga., is just 88 miles from Sherrer's home and pharmacy in Marietta, he continued, "Remember President Roosevelt's life after he was stricken with polio? His goals were the same, but his methodology was different. He worked more readily with others to complete his tasks and to work toward his goals. And that is something that I can definitely relate to, as I am personally inspired by his 'infinite patience and never-ending persistence' in my own life."

At the Second General Session, NCPA CEO B. Douglas Hoey, Pharmacist, MBA, delivered the state of the association address. Looking ahead to a value-based pharmacy reimbursement model, Hoey said, "Independent community pharmacies offer what payers need. We can have the most impact with the sickest and most costly patients. We are missing one key ingredient. Independents must aggregate in different ways. They must be able to contract with a payer or a hospital system as a group to provide products and services. They especially must be able to do this in geographic regions where that hospital or health plan has a lot of patients. In this model, payers can skip the middleman. Who needs them in the middle adding costs anyway?"

As part of the convention, the House of Delegates elected officers and board members for 2015-16 (see page 18) and approved new policy positions. Bradley Arthur, RPh, was named president of the 117-year-old organization. Arthur co-owns two full-line pharmacies in Buffalo, N.Y., and is the son of the late NCPA President Donald J. Arthur, who served in that role in 1988-89. (See page 22.) New to the leadership team is Justin Wilson, PharmD, who was named fifth vice president. Wilson is co-owner/manager of Valu-Med Pharmacy in Midwest City, Okla. He serves as chairman of NCPA's committees on state legislation and state regulatory affairs.

The delegates also ratified policy resolutions supporting value-based care with community pharmacies serving as outpatient health care centers and reaffirmed support for collaborative practice agreements with prescribers, while expressing opposition to PBM inflation of patient copays and PBM imposition of direct and indirect remuneration fees (DIRs) that make it difficult and sometimes impossible for pharmacies to determine their true reimbursement rates.

"These resolutions address two areas that are vitally important to independent community pharmacists," Hoey said. "Tomorrow's health system will put more emphasis



on quality of care and patient outcomes. Independent community pharmacists are well positioned to lead that transformation, at times through physician-pharmacist collaborative practice agreements, and should be appropriately reimbursed for their services. In addition, the claw back tactics of PBM corporations are out of control. As our country demands more transparency in health care pricing, requiring more disclosure from PBM corporations is a great place to start.”

Other convention highlights included (see what you missed?):

- The three-day, 11-hour trade show featuring more than 235 exhibitors and 310 booths.
- Educational programming comprised of 21 hours of CE, 17 hours of non-CE sessions, and 87 speakers.
- Keynote speaker and economist Steven D. Levitt, co-author of the best-sellers *Freakonomics* and *Think Like a Freak*, describing how asking simple questions can reach startling and far-reaching conclusions, including the example of an IRS employee whose suggestion saved taxpayers \$2 billion in its first year alone.
- White House “Drug Czar” Michael Botticelli calling on community pharmacists to help fight opioid prescription drug abuse.
- Award-winning TV journalist and former CNN anchor

Candy Crowley moderating a panel at the Second General Session titled, “Community Pharmacy’s Future in the Rapidly Changing Health Care System.” The panel consisted of now NCPA President Bradley J. Arthur; Edmund J. Pezalla, MD, a vice president at Aetna; Charlene Frizzera, former acting administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services; and Albert Thigpen, RPh, a former PBM executive.

- In a separate speech, Crowley predicted that the Democratic and Republican presidential nominees, respectively, would be Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush or Marco Rubio.
- Eight major awards presented (see page 20).
- Pharmacy students from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Pharmacy winning the 2015 Good Neighbor Pharmacy NCPA Pruitt-Schutte Student Business Plan Competition (see page 21).
- The bring-down-the-house closing night entertainment of Tony Award-winning singer and TV sitcom icon Jason Alexander (George Costanza of “Seinfeld”).

The NCPA 2016 Annual Convention will be held at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans Oct. 15-19. Registration information will be available in the spring. ■

Michael F. Conlan is editor of *America’s Pharmacist*.