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TD Says Good-Bye Deb Love, Hello Jim Beckner!

"All good things come to an end - darn it."

In its lead editorial Dec. 27, the Richmond Times-Dispatch bemoaned the retirement of RAM's executive director, Deborah Love, and lauded the hiring of her successor, Jim Beckner.

"The Times-Dispatch salutes an individual [Love] who personifies the best in her profession. RAM has prospered under her leadership. Its membership has more than tripled" in her 20 years of service at the Academy. "The organization's visibility has increased."
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What's Coming Up on RAM Calendar?

The editorial noted that Deb will serve as a consultant with Honoring Choices ® Virginia, RAM's advance care planning initiative. For more on that, read the coverage in Virginia Business below!

**RAM's new executive director Jim Beckner** was called "an able successor" to Love. Beckner "knows his field and turf" and "appears ready to build on his inheritance. The parable of the servants and the talents come to mind."

*You'll be able to meet Jim at next Tuesday's General Membership meeting at the Country Club of Virginia (read more on that below!).*

Deb Love also was mentioned in the newspaper's end-of-year recap, along with **retiring state Sen. John Watkins**. "The region owes both gratitude." Click **here** to read more.

Jim Beckner, 52, is a respected and successful administrator of several Richmond-area healthcare organizations, including his most recent post as President of IVNA, the Instructive Visiting Nurses Association.

Since 2007, he has revitalized IVNA - Central Va.'s oldest home health care agency - and led a financial and organizational turnaround that has garnered local and national awards.

Before revitalizing IVNA, Jim helped organize and establish RX Partnership Inc., a statewide organization where he served as Executive Director, brokering free medications for use in Virginia's free clinics and health centers. From 1989 to 2005, Jim was Executive Director of the Fan Free Clinic, Inc., Virginia's oldest and largest community-based, multi-service free clinic and AIDS Service Organization.

"We are so impressed by Jim's depth of experience and passion for leading nonprofit organizations," said **Dr. Peter A. Zedler**, president of the Richmond Academy of Medicine. "We look forward to his leadership of the Academy, which
Honoring Choices Gets Statewide Exposure

Media coverage of the RAM-initiated advance care planning program, Honoring Choices ® Virginia - continued into the new year with a report by Robert Powell, editor of Virginia Business magazine, in its January issue.

"In December," he wrote, "the Richmond Academy of Medicine (RAM) launched Honoring Choices, a program designed to train health-care providers in starting a discussion with patients about end-of-life choices."

Powell noted that RAM contributed $100,000 to launch the program, "which also has the financial backing and participation of three Richmond-area health-care systems: Bon Secours Richmond Health System, HCA Virginia and Virginia Commonwealth University Health System."

Bud Hammes of the Gundersen Health System in La Crosse, Wis., a consultant who helped RAM develop Honoring Choices, told Powell: "What this program can do is really transform the health care system from one that focuses on diseases - because we don't know who this person is - [to one that] focuses on people with diseases. This makes care personalized and individualized."

Click here for a RAMcast explaining Honoring Choices!

Click here for a video report by NPR's John Ogle!

Through the Looking Glass: The Practice of Medicine in Richmond in 2020

Please make plans to join us on Tuesday, January 13, 2015 at the Country Club of Virginia to hear about the future of medicine in Richmond, specifically future practice models.

Moderated by RAM President Dr. Peter Zedler, featured panelists will include Dr. John Ward who will discuss VCU's new practice model and how it changes the way compensation is determined; Dr. Anthony Shaia who will highlight how OrthoVirginia, a large independent practice
continues to grow and evolve; and **Dr. Phil Morissette** who will discuss what a large, independent family practice model of the future looks like.

You'll also have an opportunity to meet the Academy's new executive director, **Jim Beckner**, who will assume his leadership role Feb. 2. Jim is a respected and successful executive who has led several Richmond-area healthcare organizations, including his most recent post as President of IVNA, the Instructive Visiting Nurse Association, Central Va.'s oldest home health care agency.

Come on out and welcome Jim aboard!

Cocktails at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:15 p.m. and the panel discussion will begin at 7:00 p.m.

**Guest fee is $40**

Please mail guest fee checks to 2821 Emerywood Parkway, Suite 200, Richmond, Virginia 23294 or call the Academy at 643-6631 with your credit card information. Questions? Contact Lara at 643-6631 or lknowles@ramdocs.org.

**TO REGISTER**

Call 643-6631, email lknowles@ramdocs.org or register on-line by clicking here.

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**Love Prior Authorization?**

**Join us for White Coat Day 2015 - February 3!**

Prior authorization is one of the biggest headaches for most practices. It takes away precious staff time and often places insurance companies between a physician and their patient, thereby delaying needed care. That is why the Medical Society of Virginia (MSV) is taking on prescription prior authorization in 2015. While it will be a tough fight, MSV and RAM are committed to working with legislators and health care stakeholders to find a better way.

Help fight the fight! Join us for White Coat Day 2015 --- **Tuesday, February 3** from **8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

Please also click here to visit MSV's prior auth webpage for everything you need related to prior authorization reform.

**WHAT WILL YOU HAVE TO DO?**
• Take the morning off from your duties on February 3 (from 8:00 AM to 12:30 p.m.).
• Be at the pick-up site at 7:30 AM to catch the carpool that will bring you to the Hilton Garden Inn-Richmond Downtown (MSV's base of operations during the General Assembly session) or meet us at the Hilton Garden Inn at 8:00 a.m.
• Attend a morning briefing about what's happening on that day at the General Assembly.
• In small groups, visit one or more elected officials (RAM staff will arrange the meetings and take you there).
• Wear a white coat!

WHAT WILL RAM/MSV DO FOR YOU?

• Arrange transportation from your hospital to the Hilton Garden Inn-Richmond Downtown.
• Arrange meetings for small groups of physicians with elected officials.
• Provide you with background information so you can discuss issues with the elected officials.
• Feed you breakfast and lunch.
• Lend you a white coat if you don't have one.
• Return you to your hospital.

Please email Lara at Iknowles@ramdocs.org or call her at 643-6631 if you are interested in joining us this year!

McDonnell's Two Year Verdict Seen as Defense Win

Former Virginia Bob McDonnell's two-year prison sentence was "far lower than what prosecutors had sought" and "means that the popular politician will be free before his 63rd birthday," reports The Washington Post.

U.S. District Judge James R. Spencer said he was moved by the outpouring of support for McDonnell, though he could not ignore the jury's verdict. McDonnell vowed to appeal the judge's decision. McDonnell also received two years of probation. His lawyers asked that the former governor be allowed to serve his time at a federal
penitentiary in Petersburg, and Spencer agreed to make that recommendation to the Bureau of Prisons.

"A price must be paid," Spencer said. "Unlike Pontius Pilate, I can't wash my hands of it all. A meaningful sentence must be imposed."

The Post reports the penalty "is a win for defense attorneys, who had asked that the former governor be sentenced to mere community service as prosecutors initially advocated for a prison term stretching longer than a decade."

Federal sentencing guidelines called for a prison sentence of between 10 years and 12 years and seven months. Prosecutors had argued that anything less than a decade behind bars "could easily lead other public officials to believe that the potential benefits of corruption outweigh the costs."

But 440 letters from supporters helped McDonnell's defense team convince Spencer "that McDonnell's family had suffered enough through a trial that put their personal failings on public display," the Post reported. His defense argued that the McDonnells' ordeal alone "was enough to deter any public official from making similar decisions," according to the Post.

Spencer ordered the former governor to report to prison Feb. 9. His wife, Maureen, will be sentenced Feb. 20.

Standing outside the courtroom after his sentencing, McDonnell said he was "deeply, deeply sorry" for some of his actions, but maintained he has "never, ever betrayed my sacred oath of office."

He walked out of the building clasping the hands of daughters Cailin and Jeanine, who both cried after the two-year sentence was read. "McDonnell, who did not cry, then hugged all of his children and kissed his wife on the cheek."

He thanked Spencer "for the mercy he displayed to me today," but told reporters he "disagree[s] with the verdict and is filing an appeal today or tomorrow."
He added, "I have immense faith in the justice system," but said his "ultimate vindication" will come from Jesus Christ.

Spencer's two-year sentence imposed on McDonnell may set "a cap" for his wife's punishment, reports the Times-Dispatch.

Besides the ex-governor's relatively light sentence, the biggest surprise at yesterday's hearing was an unexpected appearance by the former first lady of Virginia.

"She came into the courtroom with a son on each arm, squired down the center aisle in a ruffled gray suit like an oddly sorrowful mother of the bride," Post reporter Laura Vozzella wrote.

"Her surprise appearance once again thrust the McDonnells' strained family relationships into the center of the courtroom drama."

Click here for a column by the Post's Petula Dvorak who writes that Mrs. McDonnell has been "thrown under the bus" by her husband and some of her daughters.

"In Virginia, 2014 was the year to throw Mom under the bus. Then back over her for good measure," Dvorak writes in discussing "the public evisceration of the state's former first lady, Maureen McDonnell - by attorneys, by her husband, and, in the end, by her daughter."

"The same grown children who helped trigger the federal investigation that led to their parents' trial and convictions; the adult kids who allegedly raided the state's mansion for glasses, pots and pans, and stacks and stacks of food, crates of eggs and cases of alcohol; who had a wedding catering bill paid for; who flitted around the county on a private jet; who played $2,000 golf rounds and took a $10,000 party gift - now at least one of them blames Mom.

"Yuck."

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Obama Promises to Veto GOP's Workweek "Tweak" of ACA

The White House said yesterday that "it would veto a potential tweak to the health care law that would change the law's definition of a full-time worker from 30 hours a week to 40 hours a week," reports The Wall Street Journal.

Under the 2010 ACA, businesses with 50 or more employees are required to offer full-time workers insurance or face penalties. The proposed GOP bill would allow businesses to cover fewer of their workers by redefining full-time work to 40 hours a week.
"The definition change is one of the top priorities of the new Republican Congress and is part of the GOP's efforts to roll back Mr. Obama's signature health care law."

Meanwhile, "More than 4 million people, including 164,000 Virginians, selected health plans during the first month of open enrollment" for the ACA, reports the Times-Dispatch.

Harvard Profs Oppose Ocare Cost Shifts

As the new Republican-controlled Congress began trying to deconstruct President Obama's signature accomplishment - the 2010 Affordable Care Act - a debate over Obamacare's fairness to employees has broken out at unlikely place: Harvard University.

"Members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the heart of the 378-year-old university, voted overwhelmingly in November to oppose changes that would require them and thousands of other Harvard employees to pay more for health care," reports The New York Times. "The university says the increases are part of the Obama administration's Affordable Care Act, which many Harvard professors championed."

Telemedicine Can Be Hazardous to Your (Legal) Health

With an increase in the practice of telemedicine - such as remote monitoring or real-time interactions with doctors - The Doctors Company offers this "risk-tip."

Even as CMS announces an increase in Medicare payments to doctors using telemedicine, Richard Cahill, JD, vice president and associate general counsel at the The Doctors Company, writes, "However, numerous federal and state statutes have created significant liability risks for medical practitioners who engage in any form of telemedicine."

This is especially true for "physicians who engage in telemedicine across state lines" who "face serious consideration" because "laws governing the practice of medicine vary significantly among the states."

Click here to read more!

Steven Brill and America's "Bitter Pill"
Steven Brill recently talked with Terry Gross on *Fresh Air* about his new book, "America's Bitter Pill: Money, Politics, Backroom Deals and the Fight to Fix our Broken Healthcare System."

Brill is a journalist who founded Court TV, *American Lawyer* magazine and many other publications, and now teaches journalism at Yale. He ruefully shared with Gross his dubious position as a long-time critic of the high salaries of hospital presidents, executives, and others in the sector after he had to have heart surgery.

"And now I was lying on a gurney in a hospital in real fear of my life."

But the experience helped him analyze health care from a patient's perspective. He describes how he became "indifferent" to all of the costs (which he has long criticized) after paying about $12,000 of his $190,000 total bill.

"It drove home to me the reality that in addition to being a tough political issue because of all the money involved, health care is a toxic political issue because of all the fear and emotion involved."

Despite his continuing blasts at the American way of health, Brill said, "The insurance companies are not really the bad actors in this movie. The insurance companies are in many ways like us: They pay health care bills. The culprit here - and the reason that the Affordable Care Act doesn't work and is not going to work - is that nothing has been done to curb the marketplace of exorbitant bills and exorbitant profiteering on the part of hospitals, medical device makers and obviously the drug companies."

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**PartnerMD Founder Steps Down**

Linda Nash, founder and CEO of the concierge and executive health practice **PartnerMD**, is stepping down in February "to pursue new ventures," reports the Times-Dispatch.
The company announced that Nash will remain as an adviser to the Henrico County-based company, while Steve Nardo, president of PartnerMD, will assume the CEO role.

Nash, a former educator, founded the company in 2003. Since then, PartnerMD has grown to employ 28 doctors in 11 locations, including Richmond; Northern Virginia; Seattle, Chicago; Atlanta; Charlotte; Greenville, S.C.; and Baltimore.

The firm was acquired in 2011 by Markel Corp., the Henrico-based specialty insurance company.

5 Reasons NOT to Quit Medicine

With so much talk about low morale and disgruntlement among doctors, Dr. Suneel Dhand, an author, blogger, and internal medicine physician, provides a counter-list: "Don't quit medicine. Here's 5 reasons why."

Republised on KevinMd.com, his top reason is: "Being a physician is still very special." Check out other reasons for counting one's blessings in the medical profession.

Lessons for Docs from Whitewater Rafting

"Navigating the waters of medicine can be just as treacherous as whitewater rapids," writes Dr. Starla Fitch, an ophthalmologist and motivational speaker, in Kevin.MD.

In this inspirational blog, she describes a whitewater trip in Idaho that gave her a new perspective on burnout and struggles.

"In the world of medicine, we often feel like we're swimming upstream without a paddle. Like we're the only ones who have problems out there. With no one to lend a hand. No wonder health care providers suffer from major burnout."
After watching her river guide overcome a hard day - crossing waters where his grandfather perished trying to save someone from drowning - she writes, "It taught me a lesson that we folks in medicine can learn from the whitewater rafting crew. When things get rocky, and we know they will, we need to ride alongside each other."

What's Happening?

Check your RAM calendar here.

Check out back issues of The Leg.Up.

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