

March / April 2008

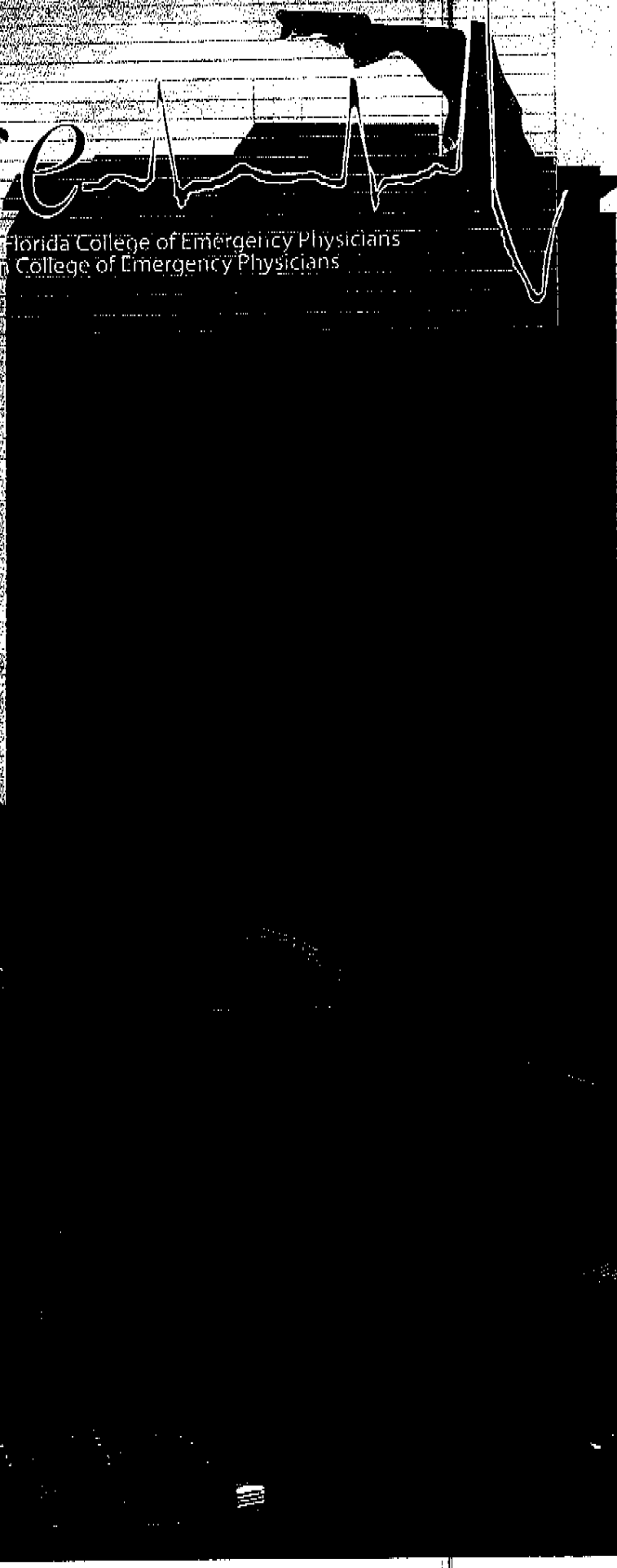
Volume 13, Number 2

EMpulsE

Official Publication of the Florida College of Emergency Physicians
A Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians



**FCEP Descends
on Tallahassee!**



THE EDITOR'S EMERGENCIES



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Time is On Our Side

Well, another Emergency Medicine Days has come and gone, but our legislative work is far from finished. The process of passing legislation is a cumbersome one that takes the work of many to get accomplished and can take several years with some wins and some setbacks in order to finally reach fruition. This year, the two main items on our legislative agenda have been the Sovereign Immunity issue and the Board Certification issue.

The Sovereign Immunity issue is making good headway for the first time. The FMA has made it their number one priority, and although we do not expect it to pass this year, it is much better received than had been expected. Legislators are finally realizing that Emergency Departments are facing a crisis with the lack of on-call specialists and the fact that the high liability involved with emergency care is taking its toll on all emergency care, regardless of a patient's insurance status, and that if we don't do something soon, the crisis will only get worse. The debate has begun and this issue is finally getting the attention it deserves. Perhaps we'll be pleasantly surprised and pass something this year, but if not, the groundwork has been set for coming back even stronger next year. There will be more on this when session is over.

As for the Board Certification issue, the bill was heard in committee in the Senate during Emergency Medicine days, which was an educational experience

for all of us. Our issue basically got "hijacked" by a small group of physicians and one Senator who turned the issue into something it is not, and convinced the other Senators that all these rural hospitals will be in trouble if we don't certify all these doctors who are not ER trained, and that if this bill passes we suddenly won't be able to fill the ERs with any doctors and we'll be in this huge crisis with Emergency Departments closing everywhere. It was one of the most appalling displays of deceit I have seen by a group of doctors who have been practicing for 20-plus years, who would in no way be impacted by this legislation, unless of course they work directly for AAPS, I suppose. They played right into the fears of the Senators and it worked...for now.

I think what disturbs me the most, is that I have sat in ACEP council meetings year after year for the past 10 years and listened to this discussion every year and watched as we have completely let the very small, vocal minority guilt the rest of us into compromising the future of emergency care. While we continue to make concessions within our organization and "bring in" these physicians, who claim that they also feel that residency training is the future of emergency medicine, but just want to finish out their careers as full members of the Emergency Medicine profession, there is an entire movement behind the scenes (or maybe not behind the scenes) to undermine all that we have accomplished. They're basically telling every emergency medicine residency graduate that they have wasted their time, because you don't need residency training to be a good emergency doctor - and that we will never have the same standing as the other specialties - that anyone can do what we do, so why bother?

Take a few moments to look at the website of this new organization, www.aep.org, and then look at the rhetoric on this other website:

<http://docwhisperer.wordpress.com>. The latter is obviously linked to this organization, with the following call to action: *"The Florida Chapter of ACEP and others are at it again. The attack of non-EM-RT docs is on again. Senate Bill 1184 in Florida is scheduled for a hearing in Tallahassee Wednesday March 12 at 2:30 p.m. The bill's unintended consequences will lead to:*

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- * *increased staffing shortages in rural and small ERs*
- * *increased worsening of the ER doc shortage*
- * *creation of an "artificial" shortage of BC ER docs*
- * *increased migration of ER docs out of Florida*

We need you to act today. The following are members of the Fla Senate committee hearing the bill on Wednesday. Please take a moment to email, fax and/or call these legislators and lets bombard them with the other side of this issue. All you need to do is explain who you are and that you oppose this bill. There is power in numbers. If you have friends or family who are voters in Florida please have them to make calls too. On the other side of the camp is the Florida chapter of ACEP who is having their annual legislative meeting in Tallahassee that very same day and they will be out in force."

In addition, they posted my recent article in *EMpulse* without my permission on this same website for commentary as well.

Ironically, if you read the wording of our bill, it allows those who have already been board certified up until this year to continue to advertise themselves as board certified and just says that from this year on, one would have to have completed an emergency medicine residency in order to now become board certified, which would allow for the natural attrition of these non-EM trained board certified docs. I would think that is more than fair. All the major organizations supported it: ACEP, FCEP, EMRA, EMRAF, FOMA, FMA, Family Physicians, AAEM, and FLAAEM, and the Board of Medicine remained neutral (not fighting us on this at all, despite their previous decision). Yet three docs testified, representing themselves who were all 20 or more years out, were directors of Emergency Departments and were clearly not impacted by this legislation. The intensity with which these physicians fought us on this when the legislation is ONLY on a go-forward basis, is beyond disturbing and I think as a specialty we need to take a hard look at what is really going on here.

Just so everyone knows, the bill did not fail. We pulled the bill in order to give more time to address the concerns that were voiced by the Senators after hearing the testimony. Don't worry. Time is on our side.

As for the other activities at EM Days, we had an excellent educational program put together by Dr. Ashley Booth and Dr. Kelly Gray-Eurom. We had the opportunity to talk with the Florida Surgeon General, whose speech can be read at www.fcep.org, and there were interesting and informative presentations by Lynn Reedy of CIPROMS South, Dr. Andrew Bern, Dr. Larry Hobbs and Dr. Vidor Friedman, as well as AHCA Secretary Holly Benson.

We also hosted a reception for the legislators that was very well attended. It was the best turnout I have seen for an EM Days legislative reception, which shows that we have gained a lot of political clout over the last several years.

As I say every year, if you weren't there, you missed an incredible opportunity, so please try to come next year. Every FCEP member should attend EM Days at least once so you can see first hand what we are doing to make emergency care better in the state of Florida. Look forward to seeing you there next year!



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