

# LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS NEWSLETTER



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## The Board Suffers Multiple Personnel Losses

**D**uring June and July of 1998, the Board suffered losses which not only impact the Board office, but the entire medical community. We extend condolences to their families and join them in mourning their loss.

### **Robert J. Conrad, Jr. - General Legal Counsel to the Board**

Robert J. Conrad, Jr., a partner in the New Orleans, Louisiana office of Adams and Reese, L.L.P., who specialized, in medical and health-care related issues, among other areas, died June 7, 1998 at the age of 47 from cancer. Mr. Conrad served as an attorney for the Louisiana State Medical Society, represented individual practitioners, groups and health care institutions in corporate, legislative, judicial and regulatory matters and was perhaps best known for defending the constitutionality of the Louisiana Medical Malpractice Law before the Louisiana Supreme Court. He also served as general counsel for the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners (Board) for at least 21 years. He continuously gave his efforts, time and abilities towards maintaining a high standard of medical practice in Louisiana through promulgation of rules and regulations, legal opinions and the prosecution of violators of the various practice acts administered by the Board. His extraordinary intellect inspired all who worked with him to be better at whatever they did, while his humor kept us all grounded in reality. Mr. Conrad will be missed by all.

### **Paula M. Mensen - Administrative Manager**

Mrs. Paula M. Mensen, Administrative Manager in charge of licensure for the Board, died suddenly on June 18, 1998 at the age of 61. Mrs. Mensen worked for the Board from December 5, 1968 until her untimely death. She discharged her duties as licensure supervisor, personnel officer and editor of the Board's Official List in a most professional manner and to the great benefit of the Board, licensees and citizens of Louisiana. Her

loss will continue to be felt for a very long time not only by her family but by all who worked with her daily at the Board office, those who called on her expertise and depended on her advice, applicants to Louisiana hospitals and schools and many national organizations.

### **J. Morgan Lyons, M.D. - Secretary-Treasurer, Chief Executive Officer**

J. Morgan Lyons, M.D., served as a member of the Board from 1953 until 1987. From 1963 until he retired in 1987 he served as Secretary-Treasurer/Chief Executive Officer. Dr. Lyons died on July 21, 1998 at his home in Pass Christian, Mississippi at the age of 84. It is very likely that many physicians practicing today were not only interviewed by Dr. Lyons during the license process, but possess an original license signed by him. He graciously gave of his time for the betterment of the profession and protection of the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Louisiana. Dr. Lyons' dignity and reputation commanded respect throughout his profession, the members of the Board and its staff. We shall all miss him.

## Resources Available to the Blind and Visually Impaired

In 1998, the Louisiana legislature adopted House Current Resolution No. 47, requesting the Board's assistance in informing the physician community of the availability of resources for the blind and severely visually impaired. It is the Legislature's hope that armed with such information physicians will, in turn, disseminate it to their patients. In response to the Legislature's request, the Board contacted a number of state and federal agencies and organizations and requested and received a great deal of informative and instructive information respecting resources, programs and services which exist for the blind and visually impaired. Such information establishes that whether an individual is in need of assistive technology or accommodations, adaptive aids and appliances, education and training, computer skills, employment opportunities, special education programs, books on cassette, in Braille, or in large print, or whether he or she simply wishes to learn how to live more independently,

special programs and services are currently available to meet their needs. Individuals desiring information concerning those resources and programs which are available to the blind or visually impaired should be instructed to contact the following agencies or organizations:

The Louisiana Rehabilitation Service—the state's vocational rehabilitation agency which serves eligible individuals with disabilities in Louisiana, may be contacted at:

<b>Baton Rouge</b>	(225) 925-4985 1-800-737-2959
<b>Houma</b>	(504) 857-3652 1-800-520-0584
<b>New Orleans</b>	(504) 568-8815 1-800-737-2875
<b>Lafayette</b>	(318) 262-5353 1-800-520-0587
<b>Shreveport</b>	(318) 676-7155 1-800-737-2966
<b>Hammond</b>	(504) 543-4040 1-800-520-0588
<b>Monroe</b>	(318) 362-3232 1-800-737-2973
<b>Lake Charles</b>	(318) 475-8038 1-800-520-0589
<b>Alexandria</b>	(318) 487-5335 1-800-520-0578

The Louisiana Department of Education, Division of Specialized Services, provides special education programs for children who are visually impaired. They may be contacted at (225) 342-6110.

The State Library of Louisiana, Section for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, which provides free library programs and services, may be reached at 1 800-543-4702 or in Baton Rouge at (225) 342-4944.

Information respecting other important services, resources and programs are available by contacting the following agencies and/or organizations:

—The National Federation of the Blind of Louisiana, 2509 Foxx Creek Drive, Ruston Louisiana 71270, at 1-800-234-4166 or (318) 251-1511;

—The American Council of the Blind, at 1-800-424-8666; and

—The Division of Social Security, Division of Rehabilitation Services, at 1-800-737-2875.

**The Board encourages all physicians to assist those of their patients who may be blind or visually impaired to achieve a better quality of life by informing them of the above information.**

## Physicians Health Program Update

The Louisiana State Medical Society (LSMS) has been helping physicians for the past 17 years. Since the creation of the Sub-committee on Impaired Physicians in 1981 to the creation of the Physicians Health Foundation of Louisiana (PHFL) in 1998, the LSMS has been there for the physicians of Louisiana. The LSMS Physicians Health Program (PHP) offers help to physician's suffering from chemical dependency, psychiatric illness, physical limitation and/or disruptive behavior. The PHP strives to be a "lifeline" for physicians experiencing problems due to impairment. The impairment may be characterized by the use of mood-altering substances, such as alcohol, cocaine, marijuana, sedatives and hallucinogens to name a few, as is the case with chemical dependency impairments. Psychiatric impairments are characterized by mood or affective disorders which primarily include depression, dysthymia and bipolar disorder (manic-depressive), but may also include such illnesses as schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Extraordinary and/or bizarre behavior may be encountered with disruptive behavior impairments. Disruptive behavior may include persistent adverse or abrasive social interactions, hostile and/or threatening actions or remarks and increased irritability coupled with an inability to experience joy or pleasure from work. Some disruptive behavior impairments may rise to the level of a personality disorder, such as antisocial or borderline. Physical limitation impairments may include Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis or could result from an injury, which leaves the physician unable to perform a particular function. This might include nerve or tendon damage in the hand of a surgeon.

The PHP assesses physicians in need of help and refers them to nationally recognized facilities that will best meet their needs. Upon discharge from these facilities, the PHP monitors their aftercare requirements (generally for a period of 5 years) to ensure that the physicians' impairments do not resurface and/or affect their ability to practice medicine with reasonable skill and safety to their patients. The PHP then advocates on behalf of these physicians to the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners (LSBME) and works to ensure their ability to practice medicine with reasonable skill and safety to their patients.

The PHP and the Physicians Health Committee (PHC) are currently in the process of finalizing changes in the policies and procedures of the PHP. The most significant change is the move of the PHP into a new foundation, which the LSMS House of

Delegates approved in 1997. This was done in an effort to expand and strengthen the existing program to better serve the physicians of Louisiana. The move into the Physicians Health Foundation of Louisiana (PHFL) is nearing completion and the first Board of Trustees of the PHFL has been elected. The new Board members include: Joseph D. Busby Jr., M.D., D. Richard Davis II, M.D., Martin J. Ducote, Jr., M.D., William T. Hall, M.D., Hugh A. King, Jr., M.D., Michael L. Kudla, M.D., Barry G. Landry, M.D., J. Bruce Steigner, M.D., Dudley M. Stewart, Jr., M.D., Martin Tanner, M.D., Ronald Taravella, M.D., Lynn Z. Tucker, M.D., and R. Mark Williams, M.D. The Board of Trustees held their first meeting on December 15, 1998.

Additionally, program revisions have been completed and will be fully implemented under the new foundation this year. Some of the program revisions include new evaluation and treatment contracts, new drug testing protocol and a complete revision of the policy and procedure manual. The Memorandum of Understanding between the LSMS and the LSBME will also be revised in the near future to reflect the changes in the program and the move into the PHFL.

PHFL Administrative Director Michael R. DeCaire will be traveling this year to update the component medical societies and their respective PHC's on the program revisions. Michael L. Kudla, M.D., PHFL President and PHC Chairman, and/or Martha E. Brown, M.D., PHP Medical Director, will be accompanying Mr. DeCaire on some of these trips.

Furthermore, the PHFL has begun accepting donations and embarking on other fund raising campaigns, including the pursuit of state and federal grants. These funds will be used to

conduct research, help defray operating costs of the PHP and assist PHP participants who are in financial need through loans and grants for evaluations, treatment, drug testing and continuing medical education programs for participants.

The PHP has also begun a vigorous awareness campaign. The PHFL intends to increase awareness among physicians, their families and the medical community, through educational efforts in area hospitals and other medical forums, in order to reach those impaired physicians who are currently going undetected and untreated. The PHFL will provide brochures, literature and other informational material related to the identification and treatment of impaired physicians.

If you are experiencing problems or know of a physician who may be impaired, please contact Michael R. DeCaire. All reports to the PHP are confidential and can be made anonymously. Additionally, if you have any questions or comments or would like to receive information about the program, please contact:

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