



For Immediate Release
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Vermont Medical Society Adopts New Resolutions, Sets Health Care Public Policy Priorities for 2019

Montpelier, Vt. (Oct. 31, 2018) – Last weekend, the Vermont Medical Society (VMS) adopted policy resolutions to address priority issues for the state’s physicians, including: recognizing and combatting bias within the health care system, reducing the use of electronic nicotine devices (ENDs), increasing awareness of the importance of physician wellness, determining the best treatment protocols for tick borne illnesses, opposing the creation of commercial sales of non-medical marijuana and streamlining the credentialing process.

VMS members approved the resolutions during the organization’s 205th annual meeting Oct. 27, in Stowe, Vt. The resolutions inform the organization’s 2019 public policy efforts on behalf of its 2,000 physician and physician assistant members. These are the adopted resolutions:

Recognizing and Addressing Bias Within the Health Care System

Implicit biases related to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, age and other demographic characteristics can result in disparities in health care, both in the diagnosis and treatment of patients and in the behavior towards health care professionals. Disparities in health care treatment can result in poorer health outcomes, higher rates of disease, longer lengths of stay in the hospital and lower life expectancies. VMS will educate its members to recognize and combat bias within the health care delivery system and will support the development of support systems designed to mitigate biases against patients and health care professionals.

Reduce the Use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Devices (ENDS) Among Youth and Never Users

E-cigarette sales have exploded over the last decade, with the latest Youth Behavioral Risk Survey in 2017 showing 34 percent of Vermont high-schoolers have tried ENDS. The new JUUL device, which looks like a USB flash drive, comes in flavors like Crème Brûlée and can contain the same amount of nicotine as a pack of cigarettes. This ENDS device is becoming very popular with youth, as it is largely undetectable and highly addictive. Sixty-three percent of JUUL users between the age of 15 and 24 did not know the product contains nicotine. VMS will partner with the Vermont Departments of Health, Liquor Control and Education, the Attorney General, schools and prevention specialists in order to educate youth on the dangers of ENDS, to support raising the age of purchase of all tobacco products, including ENDS, to 21 and to support flavor ban policies.

Wellness of the Physician Workforce

VMS will work to increase awareness of the importance of physician wellness, as burnout affects approximately 50 percent of the U.S. physician workforce and the physician suicide rate is roughly two times that of the overall population. VMS will promote dialogue among key stakeholders to discuss best practices to achieve physician wellness and combat burnout, to incorporate self-care into professional development curricula and to create opportunities for physicians to build connections with their colleagues. VMS will also work to ensure that any new health care regulation, technology or initiative will not contribute to the administrative burden on physicians, which contributes to burnout.

Mitigating Tick Borne Illness

The increasing incidence of tick-borne illness presents a significant threat to the health and well-being of all Vermonters. Vermont had the second highest incidence of Lyme Disease per capita in the nation in 2016 and accurate diagnosis of tick-borne diseases can be extremely difficult, as they can mimic other diseases. VMS will work with the Vermont Department of Health, and other stakeholders, to determine the most effective strategies to mitigate the growth of Vermont's tick population and to disseminate education for the public and clinicians on preventing, identifying and treating tick-borne illnesses.

Opposing a System of Commercialized Sales of Recreational Marijuana

VMS opposes the creation of a system of commercialized sales of non-medical marijuana over and above what exists for the sale of medical marijuana because of the negative health effects on the Vermont population, especially youth. also reaffirms its commitment to educate youth to counter the climate that portrays marijuana as a benign drug and to support education directed toward parents on the negative health impact of marijuana. VMS urges Governor Scott and the Vermont legislature to oppose commercial sales of marijuana.

Streamlining the Credentialing Process

Credentialing is the practice that hospitals, health care facilities and private and public payers use to verify the qualifications of health care professionals. Often, each health care entity has its own credentialing form, process and timeline and the effort to become credentialed by multiple facilities adds to the overall administrative burden placed on health care professionals. VMS resolves to work with interested parties and stakeholders to pursue methods of streamlining the credentialing process.

[Click here for the full language of the 2018 Adopted Resolutions](#)

About the Vermont Medical Society: The Vermont Medical Society is the leading voice of physicians in the state and is dedicated to advancing the practice of medicine by advocating on behalf of Vermont's doctors and the patients and communities they care for. The Society serves its 2,000 members through public policy advocacy on the state and federal levels, as well as by providing legal, administrative and educational support, producing a rich flow of news and information and offering member benefits that increase medical practice effectiveness and efficiency. For more information, visit www.VTMD.org.