

# David C. Jacks, MD

BY CASEY L. PENN

## A President on Behalf of Physicians

**H**e told me once, during a phone interview, that as one of the “older” physicians in the Arkansas Medical Society, he wanted to make life easier for the younger docs of the group. Still, as I approached incoming president, David Jacks, in the lobby of Branson, Missouri’s Hilton Convention Center, I saw nothing matching his description of himself. Rather than an aging physician, here was,



AMS President Dr. David C. Jacks and family

simply, a pleasant young man fairly dripping with vigor and vitality.

There to attend the Society's Annual Session, Dr. Jacks was rather hard to pin down – and for good reason. As I watched him, he put into practice what he had shared with me as a main goal – that is, he immediately made himself available to those around him. He greeted physicians coming and going, personally engaging each in conversation.

After accepting the Society's presidency during the President's Inaugural Gala, Dr. Jacks expressed his gratitude. "I was honored to speak to such a fine group that personified the old Chinese proverb that 'education in youth becomes wisdom with age.'"

### **Getting Involved**

Now having begun his 2008-2009 term, Dr. Jacks works closely with the Society toward solutions – legislative and otherwise. He will do what he can to improve efforts related to limited license practitioners, scope of practice, malpractice, tort reform, economic credentialing, trauma and maldistribution of physicians. "Legislative work is something that AMS does right!"

said Dr. Jacks. "To improve even more, we can try to be more proactive rather than reactive – we need to seek the advice of all parties involved." Dr. Jacks also expressed concern that right now, the AMS Med-PAC is pulling the workload of all the physicians in the state of Arkansas.

To attack issues head-on, Dr. Jacks concentrates on communication, advocacy, and leading by example. As president, he hopes to convince more physicians to join the Society. He hopes also to persuade the public to listen to physicians as they work to improve health care policy in Arkansas.

### **Communication**

While it's safe to say that this president genuinely loves conversation, his efforts to get in touch with those around him seem more a reflection of his leadership philosophy. "Leadership is from the ground up, not the top down," said Dr. Jacks. "You cannot be an effective leader if you cannot communicate. Our public adversaries and political opponents take advantage of that. We're not communicating as we should."

To communicate, he puts him-

self within easy reach of others and – even more important – strives to be a good listener. "I'm trying to reach out to all segments of the population to ensure their voice will be heard in the AMS. My telephone number is accessible – it's listed in the public phone book," said Dr. Jacks, who hopes to listen to physicians' concerns, suggestions, and requests of the Society. "I want us to empower members [AMS]. Whatever we can do to make it more user-friendly, we need to do that."

### **Advocacy**

Beyond communicating with the state's physicians, Dr. Jacks feels a responsibility to be an advocate for them by proclaiming their strengths and challenges to the public. As he listens to criticism, he hears a public that doesn't realize that doctors, for the most part, are treating all those in need of care – and it's costing the doctors.

"I am working on how to address public perception; physicians, typically, have not been able to do a good job of that," he said. "Doctors truly are underwriting the care of the uninsured, and they're not getting credit. I want to make their benevolence known."

### **Leading by Example**

Dr. David Jacks learned to communicate with patients and physicians at a young age. As a young teen in 1966, he spent his summer working as an orderly at his local hospital, Jefferson Regional Medical Center in Pine Bluff. "Part of my job – at age 16 – was to put catheters in people. Two of the urologists – Dr. E.L. Hutchison and Dr. Joe Bill James – taught me sterile technique and how to put catheters in. "I still use that skill today," said Dr. Jacks. "Their care in sharing this and other skills with me was the reason I chose to go to

medical school and the reason I chose urology as a specialty."

From those early experiences, he learned by example to be a giving doctor and a good citizen. Now, he works to be a good example to physicians, the public and his family.

Dr. Jacks attended medical school at UAMS from 1972-1976. He went into practice as a urologist and practices today at South Arkansas Urology in Pine Bluff. A 28-year Society member, Dr. Jacks has served on the AMS Executive Committee for the past four years and now serves on the Governmental Affairs Committee. Dr. Jacks also served for 16 years on the Arkansas State Medical Board.

Outside of his professional life, the doctor's goals remain the same. His work with youth programs in Pine Bluff affords him an opportunity to communicate with young people act as an advocate

to those who need a voice. As team physician for several local school and community athletic clubs, Dr. Jacks interacts with some at risk kids. He said, "This might be the one area where I can act as an influence in these kids' lives for good."

His own children – two boys in their 20s, and a five-month-old baby girl – offer opportunities for advocacy and encouragement, too. He enjoys doing whatever he can with them, be it hunting, camping, fishing, or playing pat-a-cake. "My wife, Donna, is a court reporter. She acts as my sounding board and keeps me grounded in a solid foundation," said Dr. Jacks. "My mom and dad are 80 and 75 and are active. I try to stimulate them and encourage them any way I can."

#### Challenging Physicians

Ultimately, the best example Dr. Jacks has found is Luke, the physi-

cian of biblical times and writer of the Book of Luke. "We know that Luke was a physician," he said. "Luke 6:31 tells us 'as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.' Sounds like the Golden Rule, doesn't it? Now, wouldn't that be a good model for us to follow in 2008?"

Dr. Jacks believes in order to continue to treat patients well and survive in the health care profession, that physicians need one another. He challenges all physicians to stand up and be involved in their own protection. "If you're not an AMS member, join. If you're not an active member, get active. As physicians, we must help each other," he said. "And I think it's important for the president to say that. Alone, we cannot defend ourselves against the many critics. As a group, we can respond and protect the foundation of medicine, which is the patient-physician relationship." AMS

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