President's message
By Jennifer Hagman, M.D.

A DIFFICULT TIME
TO LEAD

"I am constantly reminded that there are no guarantees in life. It is crucial to pay attention to your spirit and dedicate your time and energy to those things and people that feed your soul." Anonymous

These are challenging times. I am increasingly aware of the depth of the impact of the downward spiral in the economy with each day that passes. It seems that nearly every meeting I attend (at Children’s Hospital, the University, my daughter’s high school) and every news program I watch, as well as what I find in my mail, brings difficult information about the dire economic times in which we find ourselves and action that must be taken in response. Many CPS members are in prominent leadership roles and are faced with increased challenges in keeping programs, departments, mental health centers, organizations, and practices intact through the months and likely years ahead. It’s never easy in mental health: there is a constant battle to maintain services, let alone expand or improve services. But the rapidly spreading economic crisis has created even more dilemmas for those in leadership roles. In addition to weighing options and making difficult decisions, those in leadership roles also have the difficult task of conveying the information in a realistic and compassionate manner.

Beyond the administrative level, the impact of the recession is playing out more painfully for the patients and families with whom I work on a daily basis. Nearly every family I interact with in the Eating Disorder Program at The Children’s Hospital must consider now, in an even more pressing manner, the often impossible choice between taking time off from work for their child’s treatment, with the very real possibility of losing their job, or not being able to absorb the likely loss in income of time away from their job. Families are realistically concerned about losing their businesses and/or not being able to cover their share of the cost of care, yet they have a child whose recovery is dependent on their active involvement in their care. While these are common concerns, they are more intense, and the threat more real than ever before. An adult patient who is a single parent of two young children, with no extended family support, must figure out how to juggle three part-time jobs, all of which are cutting back hours, to meet rent payments in subsidized housing, and pay for medications and medically necessary care for herself and her children. Somehow she always manages to find a way to move forward each day, to keep going, to make the payments and not give up hope that eventually she will make her way to an easier path. For those who live at the edge of poverty, the recession has been even more devastating.

This legislative session for the state of Colorado is very heavily focused on the state budget and how to make the necessary cuts. Any bills that include a fiscal note are dying quickly. From a mental health advocacy perspective, we could not have better leaders at this time: Governor Ritter and First Lady Jeanne Ritter are firm and staunch supporters of access to care for those with mental illness. The Chair of the Joint Budget Committee is Senator Moe Keller, sponsor of the successful 2007 expanded parity bill. Even with these leaders in critical positions, mental health faces funding limitations in this fiscal year; but they will likely be substantially less devastating than would be the case if we did not have leadership with heightened awareness of the importance of mental health services.

On a legislative note, the CPS legislative committee continues to work closely with our astute and effective lobbyist Debbie Wagner, the Colorado Medical Society (CMS) and the "Mighty 8" (coalition of mental health consumer Continued on page 2
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and professional organizations). There is also a monthly "presidents' call" in which I participate, where the presidents of the various medical specialty groups review, discuss and coordinate legislative efforts. CMS has done a remarkable job of negotiating an improvement to the reporting requirements under the Skolnick bill, which should pass and be implemented before the May 2009 Medical License Renewal deadlines. Although the requirements of physician disclosure are more substantial, thanks to their efforts the scope is not as broad or intrusive, while still meeting the goal of protecting public safety. Fred Miller, M.D., is the CPS representative to the CMS legislative committee. He continues to do an excellent job conveying our perspective on the many complicated issues that arise.

A focus of considerable energy from physician organizations, the Governor's office, and nurses, is the sunset review of the Nurse Practitioners Act, and continued efforts by APN's to expand their scope of practice while decreasing physician supervision. CMS, CPS and other physician groups are quite active in working to ensure that patient safety remains a priority and that some form of collaborative agreement is retained. Our members with forensic expertise have also been active this session, as there continue to be bills focused on restoration of competency. Rick Martinez, M.D., Greg Kellermeyer, M.D., George Kalousek, M.D. and Jeff Metzner, M.D., continue to review bills and suggest language to improve the outcome and subsequent impact of these bills.

CMS, under the watchful eye of our treasurer Ted Wirecki, M.D. and executive director Laura Michaels, has been closely monitoring our finances and working to balance our own budget for 2009, which we were able to do with dividends from our investments and the APA grants we have been successful in achieving. CPS members shouldn't notice any change in member services or CPS activities. The Colorado Psychiatric Foundation, again under the leadership of Ted Wirecki and Laura Michaels, is also moving forward. We enjoyed a wonderful dinner and inter-

active meeting at Ted's house in December and have begun to discuss long term goals and planning for the foundation. If you would like to receive additional information about the foundation or to be added to the legislative e-mail updates list, please contact the CPS office at 303-692-8783 or cps@nilenet.com.

Dr. Hagman is President of CPS and Chair of the CPS Legislative Committee, Medical Director of the Eating Disorders Program at The Children's Hospital, and Associate Professor at UCDHSC.

SAVE THE DATE
FRIDAY,
APRIL 24, 2009

CPS SPRING
DINNER MEETING

The CPS Awards Committee will present awards to the following members:

Lifetime Achievement:
Cynthia Rose, M.D.

Outstanding Achievement:
Bert Furmansky, M.D.
Marshall Thomas, M.D.

The new Distinguished Fellows will also be recognized:
Robert Cowan, Jr., M.D.
Elizabeth Hogan, M.D.
L. Stephen Holsenbeck, M.D.
Gopa Mukherjee, M.D.
Ann Olincy, M.D.
Tony Robucci, M.D.
Christopher Schneck, M.D.

Speaker:
Christopher Schneck, M.D.

Location: TBA