

Message from the Chair



WASHINGTON
**Medical
Commission**
Licensing. Accountability. Leadership.

It is an Honor to Serve as your Chair

Terry Murphy, MD

Hello to all Washington MD's, PA's, and Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants. I am Dr. Terry Murphy, the newly elected Chairperson of the Washington Medical Commission (the Commission). I am honored to serve in these challenging times to help licensees continue to provide the excellent care they give to patients in this great state of Washington. Washington has been my home since 2007, when after leaving a busy ER shift in an inner-city urban warfare town in California, seven bullets zoomed over my windshield as two black SUVs chased a third car with multiple shots being fired toward the third car. I was shaken and it wasn't the first time, as people had been shot in the parking lot of that hospital and even the waiting room! I called my longtime friend and mentor, who recommended I interview for a position in Washington and so began a much higher quality life for myself and my family in central Washington.

Caring for victims of stab wounds or gunshot wounds almost daily, was replaced with farm accidents, motor vehicle accidents, primary care type needs, and 1-2 hunting accidents per year. Stroke and heart attack patients had to be stabilized and transferred 80-120 miles away. Burn victims had to be stabilized and transferred to the only Level 1 trauma center in the state, almost 200 miles away. There was the ever-present problem of finding qualified professionals to staff the ER. I was blessed with friends and colleagues who would drive from the west side of the state or fly in from other states to help. I'm still in touch with many of these dedicated professionals. We continued to provide quality care to all patients until after five CEO's in almost six years, the contract was severed, and all the PAs and MDs were suddenly out of work.

I continued to work in emergency medicine, still living in Washington, but practicing out of state for several years in 150-500 bed hospitals. Finally, a job offer back in Washington at a critical access hospital in a small rural town became available and became my most challenging position ever. Care was single coverage, 12-hour shifts sometimes seeing two patients per hour, sometimes more depending on the need. A multi-vehicle accident with multiple injured would all be transported to the same hospital with the single provider.

I was Chief of Staff at this hospital, when I opened a letter with the Washington Medical Commission logo, thinking "What do they want?". The letter from the governor at the time invited me to apply to represent the MD's and PAs of District 4. I presented the letter to hospital administration and the Medical Executive Committee, asking if they were in support of the application. There was an enthusiastic "YES". In retrospect, I think there was the thought of staff MD's and PA's getting a free pass in the case of a complaint, but this is not the case. When we get a complaint against a colleague, coworker, or friend, we have a recusal policy to protect the sanctity of the process. After applying, being interviewed, and waiting, I was appointed by the Governor.

That was 6 ½ years ago. I continue to be grateful to serve on the Commission with colleagues committed to quality medical care and patient safety. At this stage of my career, after 46 years of serving in healthcare, I am honored to give back to the people of Washington and medical colleagues with fairness, equity, and education. The mission of the Commission is to "promote patient safety and enhance the integrity of the profession through licensing, discipline, rulemaking, and education". It is a challenge for the 21 commissioners who serve in a climate where the number of complaints are at an all-time high. Every complaint is taken seriously and weighed on its merits. System problems are labeled as such. We strive to identify "one-off" errors as such. When discipline is indicated, it is a panel decision with discussion of what is necessary for the provider to become the best version of themselves and put the problem behind them.

Dr. Karen Domino is a great example of the quality of person serving on the Commission. Her leadership over the past two years and service for several years prior, has strengthened the Commission and its mission. Her lifelong dedication to patient safety is world renown. Mr. Kyle Karenin, Executive Director, has also demonstrated great leadership and commitment to the mission. As I attend various conferences, meeting physicians from other state medical commissions, there's always an interest in what Washington is doing. We are recognized as a strong and effective board. The staff and commissioners are working harder than ever for you and I'm honored to be a part of this process.