



Na Leo Ola

Newsletter of the Hawai'i Medical Association

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OLA PONO IKE Honoree Spotlight

Kore Kai Liow, MD 2026 Physician of the Year

Originally from Singapore, Dr. Kore Liow completed his neurology residency at the University of Utah and a research fellowship at the NIH, where he developed a passion for translating scientific discovery into patient care. After an academic career on the mainland, he moved to Hawai'i in 2009 and, recognizing critical gaps in access to neurological care, co-founded Hawai'i Pacific Neuroscience with his wife, Michelle. Today, the organization serves over 20,000 patient visits annually regardless of insurance status and has introduced

more than 200 research therapies to the islands. His efforts to reduce healthcare disparities were recognized by the Hawai'i State Legislature in 2024.

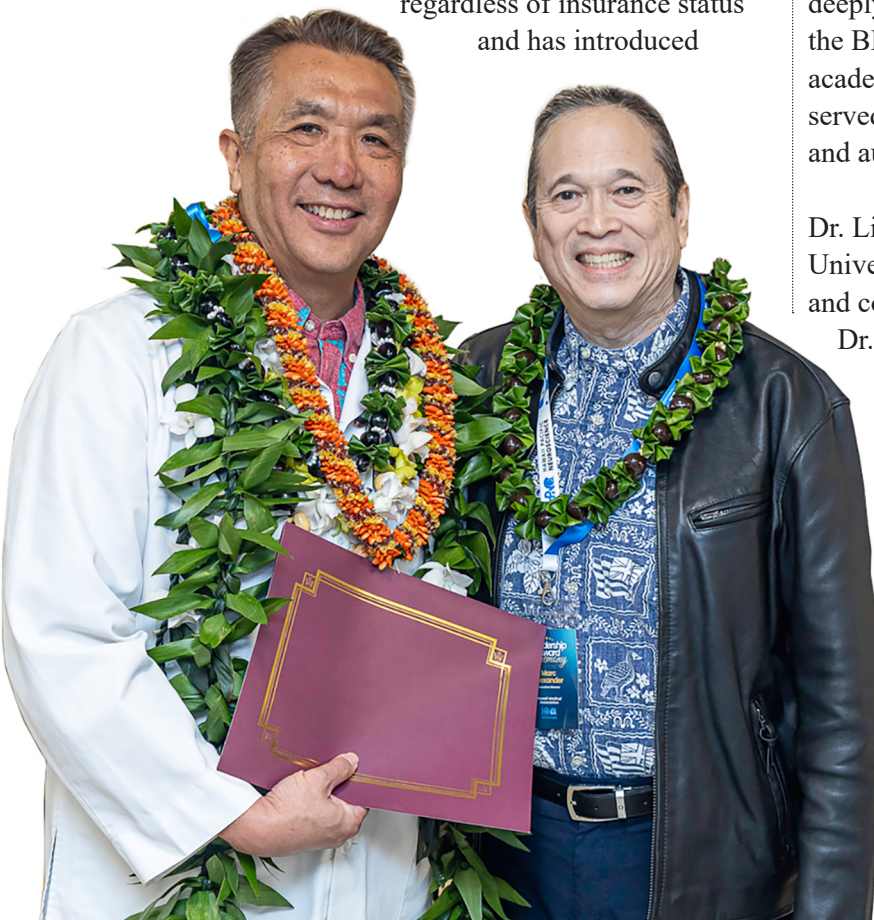
Dr. Liow has built programs that bridge clinical care and research. The Hawai'i BRAIN (Bridging Research and Innovation in Neuroscience) initiative advances basic, translational, and clinical research to address neurological diseases affecting Hawai'i and the Pacific Islands. He is deeply committed to mentorship, guiding students through the BRAIN Scholar and Intern Program with a focus on academic excellence and service to community. He has served as principal investigator for over 200 clinical trials and authored more than 100 scientific publications.

Dr. Liow is a Clinical Professor of Neurology at the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine and continues to serve NIH on its Review Study Section.

Dr. Liow views medicine as a calling - dedicated to serving underserved communities, providing hope to patients, and inspiring the next generation of healthcare leaders.

For his commitment to serving the people of Hawai'i, Dr. Liow is receiving the 2026 HMA Physician of the Year Award. Help us recognize Dr. Liow's accomplishments at the 2026 Ola Pono Ike Gala Dinner. You can make your reservations online at hawaiimedicalassociation.org.

L-R: HMA Physician of the Year Kore Kai Liow, MD with HMA executive director Marc Alexander



2026 AMA Meeting Highlights

What Matters Most for Patients, Physicians, and Hawai‘i

by Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD and Marc Alexander

At the 2026 Annual Meeting in Chicago (June 4-10) of the American Medical Association (AMA), nearly 700 physician and medical student delegates convened to adopt policies shaping healthcare nationwide. The decisions carry important implications for physicians, patients, and policymakers—including those in Hawai‘i.

Keeping Physicians at the Center of Care in an AI Era

A central focus was the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare. The AMA adopted policies emphasizing that AI should support—not replace—physician judgment. Policies call for transparency, accountability, the use of evidence-based data, and physician oversight in both clinical care and insurance coverage determinations.

For patients, this helps ensure that care decisions remain individualized. For physicians, it reinforces their role as leaders in clinical decision-making.

Addressing Payment and Access to Care

The AMA reaffirmed Medicare physician payment reform as a top priority and emphasized protecting Medicaid programs. These issues influence access to care, particularly in regions facing workforce shortages and geographic barriers, including Hawai‘i.

Ongoing payment challenges and administrative complexity continue to place pressure on physician practices and negatively impact patient access to timely, local care—especially in underserved and neighbor island



communities already experiencing physician shortages.



center: Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD was selected to the AMA House of Delegates as a member of the Reference Committee on Ethics and Bylaws

Reducing Administrative Barriers

Delegates also addressed prior authorization and insurer decision-making. New policies call for greater oversight of coverage decisions—especially when AI tools are used—and emphasize that determinations should be based on current medical evidence and include physician review.

These issues directly affect both physicians and patients, particularly when delays in care occur due to administrative processes.

Strengthening Public Health and Workforce Capacity

Policy actions also focused on expanding maternal health services, supporting maternal mortality review

efforts, and addressing healthcare workforce shortages. These priorities align with ongoing challenges in ensuring access to care in rural and underserved communities.

Selected Specific Actions by the AMA Supported by the HMA

At the 2026 AMA Annual Meeting, the House of Delegates adopted several

policies with direct relevance to Hawai‘i and the physician community. These included **Resolution 239, Medicare Administrative Contractor Policy Modification**, adopted as amended; **Resolution 310, Increasing Capacity and Access to Maternal Health Services in Rural**

Areas, adopted as amended and co-sponsored by Hawai‘i; and **Resolution 315, Expanding the Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program Eligibility**, adopted as amended, co-sponsored by Hawai‘i. Together, these actions advance HMA priorities around Medicare administrative accountability, rural and neighbor island access to care, maternal health capacity, and strengthening the Native Hawaiian health workforce.

The American Medical Association (AMA) House of Delegates (HOD) typically considers 200 to 250 combined reports and resolutions. For more information on a specific report or resolution, and other news at the

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Executive Director's Message *by Marc Alexander*



Leading with Aloha, Delivering Results

Over the past month, the Hawai'i Medical Association

has continued to strengthen its role as the trusted, thoughtful voice of physicians and patients across our state. Through our Conversations at HMA, policy engagement, and public presence, we are not only participating in the dialogue—we are contributing to it. Our recent discussions with healthcare leaders and legislative experts have informed ongoing conversations about key issues facing Hawai'i's healthcare system.

Equally important, we are building trust through consistency. From social media engagement to podcasts and public forums, HMA is showing up with a clear message: physicians

must be at the center of decisions that impact patient care. As one member recently shared, "HMA brings physicians together in a way that is thoughtful, respectful, and focused on what truly matters—our patients."

Our advocacy reflects that same approach. Whether working collaboratively with health plans on payment transitions or engaging policymakers, we are guided by respect, credibility, and a commitment to solutions. This includes our recent engagement with the Governor regarding **SB 847**—a bill that would allow psychologists, under a pilot program, to prescribe certain medications, including controlled substances. In coordination with the American Medical Association, HMA raised concerns about patient safety—particularly around prescribing authority, training, and safeguards—while also recognizing the shared

goal of expanding behavioral health access (letters are available online for members). Even in complex situations, we have demonstrated that it is possible to advocate clearly and firmly while maintaining a constructive, partnership-oriented tone.

This is what physician leadership in Hawai'i should look like: strong, steady, and grounded in aloha.

Call to action: I encourage each of you to stay engaged—participate in Conversations at HMA, share our resources, and invite your colleagues to join. This is also an election year. It is critical that physicians are visible, informed, and engaged so that candidates understand that physicians vote, they pay attention, and they care deeply about the future of healthcare in Hawai'i. Together, we will ensure that physicians and patients across our state are heard—and well served.



Pu'ulu Lapa'au Caring for Hawai'i's Medical Community August 19, 2026 5:30 p.m. on Zoom

Our next episode of Conversations at HMA welcomes back the leadership from Pu'ulu Lapa'au. Joining us is Executive Director **Geri Young, MD**, and Medical Director **Angela Gough, DO**.

In 1983, The Hawai'i Medical Association established a Committee on Physician's Health (CPH). For over 20 years, CPH consisted of a dedicated group of volunteer

physicians who assisted and monitored their colleagues in need.

Time and experience demonstrated the need to establish a stand-alone entity, independent from any outside group, regulatory agency, or organization. In October 2006, Pu'ulu Lapa'au, the Hawai'i Program for Healthcare Professionals was formed.

The mission of Pu'ulu Lapa'au, the Hawai'i Program for Healthcare Professionals, is to promote patient safety and care by improving the health, well-being and effectiveness of healthcare professionals. This is achieved by offering confidential support and advocacy to healthcare professionals with potential conditions including substance use disorders, mental or physical illness, work-life imbalance and behavioral concerns.

They also help determine fitness to practice and practice re-entry.

This presentation will be available via Zoom. To sign up, please visit the HMA website at hawaiiomedicalassociation.org.

Legislative Update

As of Monday, June 29, 2026, 181 bills have been signed by the governor into law and are now acts. There are 86 bills pending the governor's action. There are four bills left on his intent to veto list.



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2026 AMA Meeting Highlights

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annual meeting, please visit the AMA annual meeting webpage at ama-assn.org/house-delegates/annual-meeting.

Engaged and Learning

Dr. Ignacio and Marc Alexander attended multiple meetings of importance, including the Scope of Practice update, the AMA Litigation Center session, CEOs/EDs of the State Medical Associations with the AMA Executive Vice President and CEO, Dr. John J. Whyte, and general business and educational sessions. Of particular note was the meeting of the Organization of State Medical Association Presidents (OSMAP) and The Physicians Foundation, which included a panel discussion with AMA Executive Leadership and a special panel.

The featured topic was “*Organized Medicine, Meet Organized Labor: Amidst Increasing Physician Unionization, Where Does the State Medical Association Fit In?*” This panel presentation was moderated by Molly Reese, JD, Lead Attorney of the AMA Advocacy Resource Center, and panelists, Richard H. Levenstein, Esq., Shareholder and Leader of the Healthcare Practice Group, Nason Yeager, Richard Long, JD, General Counsel for the Pennsylvania Medical Society, and Jeff Howell, JD, Executive Vice President of the Missouri State Medical Association. This panel addressed the growing reality that physicians are organizing, and it is happening outside organized medicine. As physicians increasingly become employees and workplace grievances mount, more are turning to unions as a tool for governance and professional agency. For state medical associations, long a voice and source of support for physicians, the question



L-R: Elizabeth Ann Ignacio, MD, AMA President
Willie Underwood III, MD, Marc Alexander

is no longer whether this trend is real, but what to do about it. This panel explored opportunities and threats as physician unionization continues to grow.

Looking Ahead

The 2026 AMA Annual Meeting highlights a continued focus on evidence-based care, physician leadership, and patient access. As these national priorities inform federal and state policy, they will continue to shape healthcare delivery across the country—including efforts in Hawai‘i to strengthen the physician workforce and improve access to care for all patients.



L-R: AMA President-Elect Sandra Fryhofer, MD,
Marc Alexander



OLA PONO IKE

Saturday, September 26, 2026

Hilton Hawaiian Village

Coral Ballroom I - III, 5:00 p.m.

**Come and join us for the 27th annual
Ola Pono Ike Gala!**

The Hawai‘i Medical Association hosts the Ola Pono Ike Gala Dinner to bestow our highest honors of the year. We recognize HMA member physicians who have contributed greatly to our profession, and every other year, we recognize a community member who has given selflessly of themselves. This year, we’re proud to honor:

Kore Kai Liow, MD
Physician of the Year

Benjamin Young, MD
Lifetime Achievement

Shelley Wilson
Manawale‘a Community Service Award

Registration is open, so reserve your table today! You can register online at hawaiimedicalassociation.org.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MEMBER-ONLY PRICING THROUGH JULY 29TH!

HMA Members can purchase Pohaku Ku‘i Ai Tables at the discounted price of \$1,800. That’s a savings of \$1,000 - more than double the current HMA membership dues! Reservations must be made by July 29, 2026, and discount applies to current HMA members in good standing.