



Na Leo Ola

Newsletter of the Hawaii Medical Association

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July 2025

Conversations AT HMA

How the 2025 Legislative Session Impacts Healthcare in Hawai'i

Conversations at HMA is pleased to welcome special guest **Michael Robinson**, Vice President of Government Relations and Community Affairs for Hawai'i



Pacific Health. Mr. Robinson will share highlights from the 2025 Hawai'i State Legislature. He will also offer his comments on the session's impact on healthcare in Hawai'i, and preview potential issues for the 2026 session.

Conversations at HMA

Thursday, July 24, 2025, 5:30 p.m.

Free via Zoom • Register by July 24

HMA members will have the opportunity to submit questions ahead of time at bit.ly/3TG8DBd. Following Mr. Robinson's formal presentation, attendees will also be able to ask further questions by using the Q&A function on Zoom.

Sign up for Conversations at HMA today at hawaiimedicalassociation.org.

HMA Member Discount for Pohaku Ku'i Ai Tables at Ola Pono Ike Ends on July 31st!

HMA members have the opportunity to purchase Pohaku Ku'i Ai tables at the **discounted rate of just \$1,800! That's a savings of \$700 from the original price of \$2,500 - which is more than our annual membership dues!** This special discount ends on **July 31, 2025**, so visit our website at hawaiimedicalassociation.org and register today!

This member benefit is a way to thank our members for their support - HMA only exists because of you!

Public Health Lessons Hawai'i Must Remember

*by Nadine Tenn Salle, MD
President-Elect, HMA*

In December 2019, as a deadly measles outbreak swept through Samoa, a team of Hawai'i-based physicians and



nurses answered an urgent call. Within 24 hours, the Hawai'i Medical Mission was mobilized and, over just two days, vaccinated

more than 36,000 children and adults. The mission, coordinated in partnership with then Lt. Governor Josh Green, local health authorities and community partners, was an extraordinary example of what can be achieved when evidence-based medicine, cultural respect, and rapid response come together. It saved lives - and it stands as a warning for what happens when vaccine coverage drops too low.

The United States faces a new kind of threat to public health - not a virus itself, but growing doubt around the tools used to prevent it. Since taking office as U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has initiated a series of

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Executive Director's Message *by Marc Alexander*



In June, Dr. Bobby Mukkamala was inaugurated as the 180th president of the AMA, and the first physician of Indian heritage to lead the AMA. While I missed this year's meeting, I've been reading about Dr. Mukkamala with great interest. I've met many of the past AMA presidents and they are all bright, successful, and approachable – as one would expect. What's remarkable about Dr. Mukkamala isn't his heritage –

as inspiring as that might be – but that he is recovering from brain surgery after a tumor was discovered last November. Surgeons were able to remove 90% of the tumor and now he is taking an isocitrate dehydrogenase inhibitor that prevents the remaining portions of the tumor from growing.

In his speech before the House of Delegates he said: "I am here tonight because of the brilliance of many skilled physicians, because of the enduring love and patience of my family and friends, and because our health care system – for all its flaws, and there are many – is still the best in the world for people like me." He continued, "But that is not true for everyone. Most patients who walk through our doors have a much different experience."

He understands physicians and patients, for whom he has been a strong advocate during his many years of private practice. Not that he needed additional motivation, but it's not an exaggeration to say that his recent experience has further reinforced his commitment "to fight for a more functional and equitable health care system." His top priorities read in perfect alignment with HMA:

- **Calling for long overdue Medicare physician payment reform**
- **Addressing the increasingly dire physician shortage**
- **Combating physician burnout by restoring time for direct patient care**
- **Defending physician-led care through advocacy on scope of practice**

While there are many actions we can take locally, there is no doubt that we need Congress to act. What can we do here in Hawaii? First and foremost, stand together with the shared values of compassion, professionalism, respect, and aloha. We need our physician-leaders to set the tone and direction for healthcare reform, locally and nationally. But it must be done TOGETHER with ALOHA.

Protecting Medicaid

All 50 State Medical Societies and the District of Columbia have joined together and sent several letters to Congress, urging our elected officials to protect Medicaid from devastating cuts. We continue to urge our Hawai'i physicians and patients to get involved and make your individual voices heard. Learn more by visiting the **Protect Medicaid** page, which is in the Advocacy menu of our website: hawaiiomedicalassociation.org.



*S. Bobby Mukkamala, MD
President, AMA*

Nonprofit Spotlight

As a way to highlight the nonprofits we support through Ola Pono Ike, we're featuring each grant recipient with a short profile.



Established in 1991, NAMI Hawaii is the state organization of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans living with mental illness and their families. NAMI Hawaii is also dedicated to improving the quality of life of individuals and families affected by mental illnesses.

"We provide free support, educate, advocate and bring awareness on mental health that helps thousands of individuals and families in Hawaii" says Kumi Macdonald, Executive Director, NAMI Hawaii.

NAMI Hawaii is committed to offering community-focused education, advocacy, and support programs for family caregivers and individuals living in recovery. HMA is proud to be a supporter of NAMI Hawaii through our Ola Pono Ike event.

"Partnering with medical professionals and leaders helps us to service their patients, clients, families and friends, who may need help during and after a mental health diagnosis or treatment" says Macdonald.

To learn more about NAMI Hawaii, please visit namihawaii.org.



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Public Health Lessons Hawaii Must Remember

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policy changes that depart sharply from established scientific consensus. He has disbanded key panels that guided national vaccine policy, altered membership on the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, and revoked long-standing COVID-19 vaccination recommendations for pregnant women and healthy children.

Some of Secretary Kennedy's concerns - such as the call for greater transparency in regulatory processes and emphasis on preventive health through nutrition and lifestyle - are not without merit. Public health should always strive to earn public trust through openness and responsiveness. But the danger lies in allowing ideology or conspiracy to masquerade as balanced debate. When scientifically vetted guidance is weakened or withdrawn without credible alternatives, the result is confusion - especially among parents trying to make informed decisions for their families.

This confusion carries consequences. Measles is often dismissed as a childhood illness, but it remains one of the most infectious diseases in the world. Up to 90% of susceptible people exposed to measles will become infected. Complications range from pneumonia to encephalitis, and death is still a very real risk, especially for children under five.

Here in Hawai'i, low vaccination rates in some rural and neighbor island communities - combined with increased vaccine skepticism - place the state at real risk. Geographic isolation, limited pediatric access, and a long history of medical trauma among Native Hawaiian communities all contribute to today's complex landscape. But these challenges should motivate more outreach, not less. They call for facts that meet people where they are, for education rooted in trust and dignity.

Measles may be the canary in the coal mine - an early warning that public health is being weakened not just by disease, but by the erosion of shared truth. The 2019 Samoa mission showed that with urgency and unity, outbreaks can be stopped. That lesson must guide us now.

This must remain a conversation - not a mandate. Personal choice should always be honored. But those choices must be informed by science, not speculation. Let us choose to protect each other, through compassion, clarity, and commitment to facts.

**YOUR CARE IS
AT OUR CORE**

Hawai'i's Physicians

HMA Launching New Campaign to Emphasize the Physician/Patient Relationship

Physicians are compassionate healers and their patients' biggest allies. They persevered through years of medical school and residency to build connections with patients and provide the highest quality of care. However, all too often, physicians find themselves stuck between a desire to connect with patients and a need to navigate seemingly endless red tape and bureaucracy.

Physicians and patients agree that the doctor-patient relationship is essential to making the best health care decisions. They know that establishing a meaningful relationship is necessary to building trust and providing the most effective care and treatment. After all, physicians are supporting their patients through some of the most vulnerable moments in their lives.

To emphasize the importance of the physician - patient relationship, HMA has partnered with the American Medical Association in launching the **Your Care is at Our Core Campaign**. Join us in pushing back against the bureaucratic red tape of healthcare and advocating for what matters most - time for physicians to connect with their patients.

Learn more about our campaign at hawaiimedicalassociation.org.

Measles in 2025: What Hawai'i Clinicians Need to Know

On April 15, 2025, HMA hosted a panel discussion on Measles in Hawaii. The panel shared the latest data, guidance on case management, and strategies to enhance measles preparedness in clinical settings across the islands.

To watch a video of the panel discussion and gain access to important resources, visit our **Measles Update** page, which is in the **Education** menu of the HMA website at hawaiimedicalassociation.org.