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# Health Highlights from the 2016 SOA Annual Meeting & Exhibit

By Greg Fann

Actuaries in Vegas during a desert rainstorm? What are the odds? The 2016 Society of Actuaries (SOA) Annual Meeting & Exhibit was held October 23–26 at The Cosmopolitan on The Strip in Las Vegas. It was brought to my attention several times but never resolved—is it a loss leader week for the gaming industry when the actuaries come to town? The meeting registration level set a new high mark, following a record attendance at the Health Meeting in Philadelphia in June. The Health Section sponsored 22 relevant and timely presentations at the annual meeting. The initial feedback on the quality of the health sessions has been overwhelmingly positive.

The meeting kicked off with a presidential address from Craig Reynolds, followed by a keynote speech from Sal Khan, founder of Khan Academy. We learned that Khan Academy’s mission is to “provide a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere.” As outlandish as that sounds, Mr. Khan and his team are actually doing just that, through a vast network of YouTube videos.

Mr. Khan began this endeavor by casually providing tutoring to family members. Word traveled within his family in other geographical areas that he was pretty good, and he was asked to provide video lessons that could be viewed over the internet. Interest outside his family developed by word-of-mouth, and he eventually left his day job to develop educational videos full time.

His discussion was insightful and full of humor. I give kudos to the planning committee for recruiting Mr. Khan and for bringing his good work to our attention. It certainly provided a healthy dose of inspiration to kick-start our meeting.

The SOA Outstanding Volunteer Award recipients for 2016 were also recognized during the opening session. Congratulations are in order for Health Section members Jeffrey Drzazgowski, Ian Duncan, Jennifer Gerstorff, Brian Louth and Karen Shelton.

The Monday morning health sessions consisted of a discussion on genetic testing and another on accountable care organization (ACO) challenges. The afternoon sessions included payment reform and Medicaid rate development, Affordable



Guest room balcony view of the world-famous Bellagio fountains.

Care Act (ACA) case studies, all-payer claims databases and provider payment benchmarks. Before the customary evening reception, the group of Health Section council members in attendance braved the rainy weather and the Las Vegas pedestrian logistics to cross several streets and have a casual dinner inside the Paris hotel. While waiting for our table to be prepared, we huddled outside the restaurant around one of those fountains where well-wishers sometimes throw loose change. During that time, we could not help but notice a young gentleman enter the fountain carrying a small bucket and, well, let’s just say, proceed to conduct himself in a manner not in accordance with Precept 1, Annotation 1-4.

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Outstanding volunteers being formally recognized in opening general session.

Tuesday morning started early with several presentations at the Health Section breakfast. The outgoing Health Section council chair, Elaine Corrough, welcomed attendees and shared an overview of the council's activities and achievements for 2016. She also expressed gratitude to outgoing council members and staff partners for their work over the past year. As the session coordinator and the Health Section's representative to the annual meeting committee, I then had the privilege of introducing the new council chair, Brian Pauley. Mr. Pauley emphasized several points for the 2017 council: engaging the strong new class of council members; supporting *Health Watch* and the editorial board concept; focusing and aligning strategic initiatives; invigorating the sub-groups and continuing education platforms; and looking forward to 2017 events building on the success of the 2016 Health Spring Meeting and other section-sponsored activities.

David Axene was the scheduled featured presenter for the breakfast, sharing his thoughts after 45 years as a health actuary, prolific writer and speaker, and thought leader in our profession. Mr. Axene was unfortunately not able to attend the annual meeting due to an unexpected event. While attendees were disappointed to miss Mr. Axene's presentation, they still had the opportunity to hear the general subject matter Mr. Axene had planned to present. An edited version of his original presentation, "Actuarial Profession at Risk?" was presented by Elaine Corrough on his behalf, focusing on protecting the integrity

and rigor of our work as health actuaries in a rapidly changing environment. We are grateful to David Axene for raising these issues and providing fodder for extensive postsession discussions among attendees.

Tuesday morning sessions were focused on hospital indemnity pricing considerations, advantages and challenges for provider-led health plans, next-generation ACOs and what we have learned from the first two years of the ACA.

The Presidential Leadership luncheon began with a passing of the gavel from Craig Reynolds to Jerry Brown. Mr. Brown delivered a presidential luncheon speech that included a discussion of the recently updated SOA strategic plan. Mr. Brown's address was followed by a keynote speech from Nick Bilton, a technology journalist at Vanity Fair. Mr. Bilton briefed us on new advances in technology, which was very interesting and conceptually quite astounding at times, even for tech-savvy meeting attendees.

Tuesday afternoon provided sessions on ACA coding improvements, Medicare Advantage minimum loss ratios, ACA lessons learned, chronic diseases and mortality rates and an informative update on SOA Health research.

Wednesday, the final day, opened with sessions on behavioral solutions to ACA risk coding and opportunities to improve



long-term disability performance. The behavioral solutions session was presented by Andrew Sykes and provided insight into habit creation and behavioral influence methods. This session and the update on SOA Health research session, presented by Elaine Corrough and Geoffrey Hileman, were two of the five recipients of outstanding session awards. The following sessions included more discussion of value-based care, Medicaid managed long-term services and supports, profitability for group life and disability and key issues of Medicare Supplement profitability. The conference concluded at 1:15 p.m., which was about the same time that meeting attendees had mastered the conference floorplan and discovered the most direct route back to their guest rooms.

Before driving home to California, I persuaded my wife to join me on a challenging and rugged hike to the peak of Turtlehead Mountain in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation

Area. Upon arrival at the peak, I snapped a “Leaving Las Vegas” picture for good measure. On the second half of our descent, I progressively learned that hiking under the stars in unfamiliar territory was not my wife’s favorite activity. I will remember that next time. Speaking of next time, the 2017 Health Meeting will be in Hollywood, FL, June 12–14. Details are available on *SOA.org*. 2017 is expected to be another quiet year in the health insurance world; there won’t be that much to discuss (only kidding, of course). Planning is well underway and it looks to be another fantastic meeting. I hope to see you there. ■



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Las Vegas from peak of Turtlehead Mountain in Red Rock Canyon.