



## President's Message



**Sherrel L. Hammar MD**  
**President, Hawaii Medical Association**

**W**hat's in a name? The name of the Hawaii Medical Association is copyrighted and belongs to the Association. But, "HMA" is not – and there the problem lies. Recently a new medical insurance company from the mainland moved to Hawaii. It is called HMA Inc. Our members have been very concerned because of the confusion with HMA (Hawaii Medical Association). There appears to be nothing that can be done to prevent HMA (the insurance company) from using this acronym. In spite of the fact that the Association was established more than 100 years ago, we do not have proprietary ownership on "HMA." Our legal advisors are reviewing the situation. Our Association is not related to HMA Insurance. The confusion persists.

Additional concerns have emerged. The Hawaii Medical Association is a non-political professional physicians group. In spite of allegations, the HMA is and must remain politically neutral. The HMA does not endorse nor support any candidate running for political office from any party. Nor are candidates permitted to use their HMA association or office to promote their campaign, to do so is misleading and jeopardizes our non-profit status. Candidates who violate this principle are subject to censure and/or reprimand. HAMPAC is the political action organization and is separate from HMA.

On a more positive note, HMA Legislative Committee is busy advocating for our organization. The HMA legislative committee has been meeting weekly to monitor and review the proposed bills and the legislative agenda. This committee is large and hopefully representative of the organization. Any HMA member is welcome to attend. The committee attempts to reach a consensus or position on each bill being considered by the legislature that has a potential impact on physicians, their practice and their patients. The timing is so tight many times that there is no time to conduct a complete survey of the membership. Even our lobbyists have difficulty knowing when bills will be heard.

Some bills are very controversial. Physician Assisted Suicide, which was featured in a letter to the editor in the February issue of the HMJ, is a prime example. Both sides deserve to be heard, but

in the end, your medical association is asked to take a position on such potential legislation. The HMA has not supported the Physician Suicide bill as proposed but supports the rights of all patients to die without pain and with dignity. Practitioners of modern medicine have the ability to relieve pain in their terminal patients. All physicians and health-care providers are strongly encouraged to update their knowledge and skills of pain control through the CME courses, hospital in-service educational sessions and consultative services that are available.

In addition to advocacy efforts, we look for other ways to strengthen the HMA. We are establishing a more formal relationship with the Australian Medical Association Queensland. Our two organizations have many problems in common regarding the medical indemnity crisis.

Just one last note, this year, the House of Delegates and the Annual Meeting have been made separate events. The House of Delegates will be September 24-25, at the HMA. The Annual Meeting will be September 3-5, 2004, at the Sheraton Waikiki. More information will be forthcoming. Please plan to attend the HMA's Ola Pono Ike dinner and silent auction on May 22 at the Sheraton Waikiki. These two events are HMA's major fundraisers.

**2004**  
**OLA PONO**  
**IKE** HEALTH IS KNOWLEDGE

*Gala Dinner and Silent Auction*  
*Saturday, May 22, 2004 ~ Sheraton Waikiki*  
*Register online [www.hmaonline.net](http://www.hmaonline.net)*