

LOUISIANA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS NEWSLETTER



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HURRICANE KATRINA/RITA

The weather man had been predicting it for years, but no one could have imagined the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to the Gulf Coast Region. Immediately after the Hurricane, the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners ("Board") opened a satellite office in Baton Rouge to provide displaced licensees with information regarding their licenses and to assist volunteer physicians and health care professionals coming to Louisiana to provide services. Fortunately, the physical office sustained only minor damage, and reopened in early October at the Camp Street location in New Orleans, upon return of electricity to the area and lifting of the mandatory evacuation by the Mayor. Visitors are warned that the elevator is in the final stage of repair, so you may need to climb four flights of stairs to meet with staff on the upper floors.

The Board takes this opportunity to express a heart felt thanks to all the health care professionals who responded to the citizens of Louisiana in its time of need. We especially thank the Federation of State Medical Boards, the American Medical Association and the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals for assistance to our licensees as well as assisting those healthcare professionals providing service to Louisiana citizens.

As a service to its licensees, the Board extended licenses and permits expiring immediately after the Hurricane until December 31, 2005. No late fees were assessed during this time. The assessment of late fees resumed January 1, 2006. Licensees should be aware that the postal service has not returned to full service in the New Orleans area. Therefore, you must account for extra time in mailing your renewal for processing.

Also, continuing education requirements not completed for the 2005 calendar year were extended through December 31, 2006. For example, if you were required to obtain 12 hours of continuing education by your renewal in 2005, you will need 24 by the end of 2006. If you have any questions regarding continuing education requirements, you may contact, Peter Zengel, Licensing Analyst, CEU, at 504 568 6820 ex. 256.

To assist the Board in providing information to various agencies regarding the number of physicians and allied health professionals displaced by Hurricane Katrina/Rita, we ask that you go to our website, www.lsbme.louisiana.gov and complete a short questionnaire giving your displaced location and plans for returning to the metropolitan area. This will enable the Board to respond better to government agencies and other entities requesting

information for future planning. The form asks for your suggestions for future emergency preparedness planning.

JOHN B. BOBEAR, M.D. RETIRES

John Barry Bobear, M.D. ended his illustrious medical career on October 17, 2005, having served in the dual capacity of Executive Director and Director of Investigations with the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners from November 2001. He began



working for the Board in 1990 as the Medical Director in charge of investigations. In this capacity he handled violations of the Medical Practice Act by physicians and other acts of allied health professionals under the jurisdiction of the Board. He also handled violation of unlawful practice by non-licensees seeking injunctions and cease and desist orders.

Dr. Bobear came to the Board from Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center following his retirement in 1990. He was appointed as an instructor at L.S.U. School of Medicine in New Orleans in 1956 and worked as an Assistant Professor of Medicine, an Associate Professor of Medicine and Professor of Medicine. He established the first Department of Pulmonary Care at Southern Baptist Hospital; he was Chief of the Pulmonary Section at LSUHSC and Director of Pulmonary Services at Charity Hospital. He was appointed Assistant Dean, Associate Medical and Medical Director at Charity Hospital from October 1977 to December 1985. He retired from clinical medicine in 1998 and continued his duties with the Board.

During his career, Dr. Bobear served on the Board of Governors of the Orleans Parish Medical Society, Delegate to the Louisiana State Medical Society, Editorial Board of the Louisiana State Medical Journal, and Editor of the Orleans Parish Bulletin.

Among the many awards received during his career, his appointment as member of the AOA, Breath of Life Award of the

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Who are the Members of the Board?

Linda Gage-White, M.D., PhD, MBA, FACS was appointed to the Board on January 23, 2002. A physician from Shreveport, Louisiana, Dr. Gage-White practices in the field of otolaryngology at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, where she is Clinical Professor in the Department of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery and Director of the Multidisciplinary Cleft Lip/Palate Clinics. She has been in practice for nearly 22 years.



Dr. Gage-White received her undergraduate degree from Duke University. She graduated from the University of Miami School of Medicine on June 4, 1978 and completed her post graduate training at the Iowa Hospital and Clinics in Iowa City, Iowa. Dr. Gage-White is certified by the American Board of Otolaryngology. She is a member of the Louisiana State Medical Society, the Shreveport Parish Medical Society, and the American Academy of Otolaryngology, just to name a few. Her practice interests are pediatric otolaryngology, cleft lip and palate reconstruction, speech disorders and allergy. Dr. Gage-White has been involved in a number of medical missions throughout the world, most recently in the Philippines. She has been a member of several Face-to-Face delegations giving lectures and demonstrations in China and Vietnam.

Recently, Dr. Gage-White was a presenter at the January 2005 Southern section meeting of the Trilogic Society. She presented a paper entitled "Alloderm Nasopharyngeal Implants for Velopharyngeal Incompetence". She also coauthored an article appearing in the May-June 2005 issue of the "Archives of Facial Plastic Surgery" titled *Topical Mitomycin C in the Prevention of Keloid Scar Recurrence* showing the results of a study conducted at LSUHSC. The objective of the research was to assess whether mitomycin C would prevent the recurrence of surgically removed keloid scars.

On the Board, Dr. Gage-White serves on the Licensure Committee handling applications for licensure of physicians and surgeons and clinical laboratory personnel, and on the Board's Malpractice Committee. She serves as the Board member backup for the licensure of midwives and is currently serving on the subcommittee addressing modification of the rules for midwifery in the state of Louisiana. She handles the interview of applicants for the northern part of the state at her office in Shreveport and at the Board office. She has studied and presented at national meetings on alternative

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The President's Corner

Many things have occurred since Hurricane Katrina. The Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners

has been working diligently to become fully operational. Katrina did result in the loss of a significant number of employees and the retirement of Dr. Bobear, executive director. All of the remaining employees have worked hard and have now virtually "caught up" on licensure renewals, etc. The Board members have been meeting monthly as we have been doing in the past. Katrina did cause some new and previously unexpected challenges which have been met and addressed.

The Board has worked with the Department of Health and Human Services in allowing voluntary medical personnel to come into the state and offer assistance. The Governor's executive order creating temporary licenses expired on December 31, 2005.

There has been much discussion about many physicians that are leaving the post-Katrina medical community. We have been asked about this numerous times by various individuals and agencies. While an accurate analysis of physician licensure can not be stated with certainty until completion of a full licensure cycle (12 months), and the number of licensees does not necessarily reflect those who previously held licenses and/or have relocated to another state to practice or those who simply have chosen not to return to practice, we do have some data related to this. We are receiving approximately 80 new applications per month. This is essentially no change from previous years. Whenever a physician is seeking licensure in another state, that licensing agency will seek an endorsement from this Board. Last year between the months of September and February, we had approximately 200 such requests. For the same period this year, we have had approximately 400 endorsements requests. Although this represents a twofold increase, the numbers are not alarming, nor indicative of the feared mass exodus of physicians from this state. In addition, the number of licensed physicians has remained essentially the same as last year, approximately 16,000. When taking these statistics into account, this should be reassuring to the medical community and the citizens of Louisiana alike.

Finally, the Board is hoping that some changes will occur in the upcoming year. Most notably, we will be attempting to bring more of the licensure function into that of a computer friendly entity. Some of this will allow more online access to those that we serve.

There is no doubt that Katrina has changed the landscape in New Orleans. However, the Board is responding similarly to others in this city. We are using this event as a time for self-reflection and improvement. There are many opportunities that have presented themselves; we must make the most of them.

Prescription Monitoring Program

The 2005 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature (HCR 98) directed the formation of a Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) Taskforce to assist in a study of the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing a PMP for controlled dangerous substances and drugs of concern in the State of Louisiana.

A prescription monitoring program (PMP) collects data for certain prescriptions from all dispensers (in and out of state), maintains that centralized database under the authority of a state agency required to administer the program, and then uses the data for such purposes as allowed under the enabling statute. A state PMP is designed to be an effective tool for addressing abuse of and addiction to, as well as, diversion of prescription drugs.

Beginning in 2002, Congress has allocated federal grant funds to qualifying states seeking to plan, implement, or enhance a PMP. Currently more than 20 states have a PMP in some stage of operation or planning. The grant funds are available from the Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Program administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) in the U. S. Dept. of Justice.

Prescribers would find the PMP data collection to be transparent as the drug distributors (dispensers) would supply the data. The PMP would be proactive and could accomplish a number of goals relative to public health and safety: (1) inform the public of abuse trends related to prescription drugs, (2) facilitate the treatment of persons addicted to prescription drugs, (3) provide timely information to prescribers and other appropriate users of the PMP, (4) support the legitimate medical use of controlled substances, (5) identify and prevent drug diversion, and (6) provide assistance to those investigating cases of diversion or other misuse.

Since most of the information collected is categorized as personal health information and subject to HIPAA, the PMP's enabling legislation would address confidentiality concerns. Most programs grant access to

prescribers, physicians affiliated with addiction treatment centers, impaired professional programs, dispensers, licensing agencies, and law enforcement agencies. Use could be permitted of de-identified data for research and education.

The LA Board of Pharmacy has been designated as the agency to plan and operate the PMP with assistance from the PMP Taskforce (which will become an Advisory Council). A planning grant has been awarded and an implementation grant application has been submitted. The enabling legislation has been prefiled for the 2006 Regular Legislative Session.

Physicians' Health Foundation of Louisiana

Michael L. Kudla, M.D., joined the Physicians' Health Foundation of Louisiana's Physicians' Health Program (the "PHP") in December 2005 as Medical Director. Dr. Kudla has served in a number of capacities with the PHP, chairing a number of Physician Health Committees of component parish societies of the Louisiana State Medical Society.

The purpose of the PHP is to help identify impaired physicians or potentially impaired physicians, intervene when necessary, provide referral for evaluation of the conditions underlying the impairment or possible impairment and provide assistance in pursuing appropriate treatment and monitoring.

An "impaired physician" is defined as a physician licensed to practice medicine in the state of Louisiana, who is unable to practice medicine with reasonable skill and safety to patients because of mental illness or deficiency, physical illness, including but not limited to deterioration through the aging process or loss of motor skills, and/or excessive use or abuse of drugs, including alcohol. Impairment may also be deemed to exist where, by virtue of mental or physical illness or condition, a physician's continued practice of medicine poses a substantial risk of physical harm to himself, to his family or to other individuals, whether or not a physician-patient relationship exists between the physician and such individuals. Impairment may be identified by the physician, his peers, employers and/or employees, family members, patients or others.

Under an agreement with PHP and the Board, a physician who seeks treatment for the first time can self-report to the PHP, without involvement of the Board as long as the physician abides by the recommendations of the PHP, and executes a monitoring agreement providing for such evaluation, treatment, therapy and/or monitoring as the PHP, the evaluating/treating facility, the treating physician, and the PHP determine whether they may allow him or her to continue in or return to the practice of medicine with reasonable skill and safety.

John Bobear Retirement - Continued from Page 1

American Lung Association and the Laureate Award of the American College of Physicians are the most cherished.

Dr. Bobear born in Baltimore, Maryland grew up in New York where he obtained his undergraduate degree. He earned his medical degree from Albany Medical College and received his post graduate training at Charity Hospital, New Orleans. It was his internship that brought him to Louisiana.

While at Charity Hospital he met and married the love of his life, Valerie. They have resided in New Orleans for over fifty-six years. In retirement, Dr. Bobear is enjoying gardening, reading and dining at his favorite restaurant with his wife.

ONLINE RENEWAL

Beginning in June 2006, the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners will begin the first phase of implementing accessibility of processes through online services. We will begin with online renewals processing. This means as a licensee with a current Louisiana license, you will have the option of completing your renewal on our website, www.lsbme.louisiana.gov under the renewal section of the webpage. This will make processing the renewal real-time in that once your payment is accepted, your license will be automatically updated. Our goal is to have all licensees complete the renewal process online.

There are many benefits to online renewal, one being real-time processing. Another benefit will be a permanent electronic record of your renewal attached to the file. The most important benefit, of course, is that at the time of payment, your renewal will be processed.

In completing the renewal, please remember that it is an important document. Therefore, a truthful and an accurate response is a must. Also, any changes to the renewal will be noted and address changes will be reflected immediately.

We will begin the process shortly with a mailing prompting you to visit our website. Look for this mailing soon, as it will contain important information you will need to process your renewal online.

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Linda Gage-White, M.D.

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medicine and recently attended a seminar on behalf of the Board in Amherst, New York on *Curing the Ills of Alternative Medicine and Questionable Mental Health Practices*. She hopes to help develop a policy statement on the national level relative to alternative medicine.

Her goals for the Medical Board are customer-friendly service, availability of information to the public and consistency in handling Board decisions. Dr. Gage-White is married to an attorney, Clair White. They have one son and four grandchildren. She loves to travel and water and snow ski.

Federations of State Medical Boards

Credentials Verification Services

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners recognizes the importance of the credentials verification service offered by the Federation of State Medical Boards. The Federation's Credentials Verification Service ("FCVS") establishes a permanent record of primary source-verified documents such as identity, medical education, postgraduate training, examination history, board action/disciplinary history and ECFMG certification, if applicable. Once compiled, a physician's profile is created for dissemination at a later date to hospital credentialing committees, other medical boards, medical associations, and anywhere the need for such information arises. This is beneficial because if for some reason these materials are lost or destroyed, the FCVS maintains the information on file.

There were a number of physicians displaced by the Hurricane that found the FCVS a valuable resource. Because of the special assistance given by the staff of the FCVS, these physicians were able to obtain licensure in other states without having medical school diplomas, state licensure certificates or examination scores lost during the storm. The Board urges every physician not to wait until a disaster occurs, but to utilize the FCVS now to be able to move on in the case of an emergency.