Physician Leadership in Information Technology

Nearly 140 attendees representing more than 52 member organizations, sponsors and guests graced the Camelback Inn April 6-8 at our annual spring conference, which was unmatched in its quality of speakers, presentations, audience participation—and beautiful desert weather. Heavy hitters keynoted general sessions, top industry experts led lively executive breakouts and the outdoor dinner and receptions were a smashing success for their relaxed ambience and rich networking possibilities. Everything was geared around the critical topic of engaging physician leaders in the use of IT.

Early arrivers on Thursday morning were treated to the future of healthcare in a jaw-dropping tour of all-digital Banner Estrella Hospital in the burgeoning western suburbs of Phoenix. Following that eye-opening experience was the Garden Pool-side Welcome Luncheon, which allowed attendees to transition into the conference's easy-going conversational style and information sharing. Thursday afternoon was devoted to first-rate executive presentations, including the RAND Study of EMR costs and benefits by RAND Corp. legendary researcher Richard Hillestad, PhD, senior management scientist.

Case studies of clinical leadership featured Texas Health Resources, Memorial Hermann Healthcare, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Cedars-Sinai Medical System, Providence Health System and Seton Healthcare Network. "Harnessing Clinical Decision Support" was presented by the authors of the bible on the topic: Jerome A. Osheroff, MD, chief clinical informatics officer at Thomson Micromedex, and Robert A. Jenders, MD, MS, associate professor of medicine at Cedars-Sinai and UCLA.

Healthcare statesmen

Friday morning was highlighted by talks by two of the industry's most esteemed statesmen: Thomas Royer, MD, CEO of CHRISTUS Health, who gave an inspirational talk on the CHRISTUS Journey to Excellence; and James J. Mongan, MD, president and CEO of

Partners HealthCare, who in addition to describing how Partners' strategies are enabled by IT, provided color commentary on the just-breaking news story of Massachusetts' passage of universal health coverage for all its citizens. Both talks were followed by responses from blue-ribbon executive panels. The afternoon session covered "Governing Body and Organized Medical Staff Relationships," featuring Fred Brown, former CEO of BJC Health System and Chair of JCAHO, and another distinguished panel. Janet Guptill, president of KM at Work, Inc., introduced the new SI Web II, a sophisticated but easy to use tool for enhancing member collaboration at Scottsdale Institute. Crowning the day was the enjoyable Membership Dinner on the patio.

Despite being the last day, an overflow crowd attended Saturday's breakfast executive roundtables that covered a wide range of topics, from medical informatics, CPOE and clinical decision support to designing the future clinical state and preparing medical leaders for an IT-enabled future.

Last but certainly not least, David Classen, MD, MS, VP at FCG and associate professor of medicine at the University of Utah, led a rousing, audience-interactive session on "Successful Models for Physician Leadership in IT."

Just about everyone agreed that, in a long line of great SI conferences, this year's was probably the best ever, a belief validated by many as they said their goodbyes to old and new friends, SI staff, and the beautiful desert atmosphere at the Camelback.