

AMWA History, 1924-1948

The Adams County Medical Society (membership of about 70), founded in 1850, never had a medical bulletin. Within two months (February 1924) after election as society secretary, the author became Editor, Business Manager, and everything else in connection with the Quincy Medical Bulletin, official monthly publication of the society. This appointment he retained until the end of 1930 (seven years), when he declined election as Secretary-Editor because of a scheduled 6 1/2 months' period of postgraduate medical study in Europe.

While Secretary-Editor, the author inaugurated a series of big medical meetings in Quincy, beginning in 1925, with the Illinois State Medical Society annual convention to commemorate the Adams County Medical Society's Diamond Jubilee. This was followed by an annual all-day Fall Clinical Conference conducted by clinicians from large medical centers--Mayo Clinic in 1926, Kansas City 1927, Chicago 1928, Philadelphia 1929, and Cleveland 1930. These meetings attracted a large attendance and the idea was further expanded when the author succeeded in securing the support of the medical societies in the Greater Quincy Area to sponsor the formation of the Mississippi Valley Medical Society in Quincy in 1935.

In the fall of 1924, the author launched a new bimonthly medical publication designed to help educate the general profession in regard to accomplishments of radiology. He named it The Radiological Review. The new publication was quite successful and soon had an Editorial Board comprising some of the best known radiologists. In 1927 it became a monthly publication and absorbed the old Chicago Medical Recorder (est. 1878) and its name was changed to the Radiological Review & Chicago Medical Recorder. With the formation of the Mississippi Valley Medical Society in Quincy in 1935 the periodical became its official publication and in 1936 assumed the name Radiologic Review & Mississippi Valley Medical Journal, which in 1939 was simplified to read Mississippi Valley Medical Journal.

The author's seven years' experience (1924-1930) as editor of a county medical society bulletin and 16 years' experience (1924-1940) as editor of a national medical periodical had taught him that there was much to be learned about medical writing and editing. This climaxed in the formation of an organization designed to especially appeal to the editors of the smaller medical periodicals in Illinois, Missouri and Iowa, at that time the field of the Mississippi Valley Medical Society. The new organization was formed in Rock Island, Ill., on Sept. 25, 1940, during the meeting of the Mississippi Valley Medical Society in that city, and was called the Mississippi Valley Medical Editors' Association (MVMEA). The author was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the new society, and meetings were held in 1941 and 1942. There were no meetings in 1943, 1944, and 1945, during World War II. During this period the Mississippi Valley Medical Journal became the unofficial publication of the Editors' Association.

Very little interest was manifested in the MVMEA from 1940 to 1948 and the author was convinced that a much wider appeal, both in territory and subject, was necessary for a successful organization in this field. He suggested the name American Medical Writers Association (AMWA). The MVMEA was absorbed by the new AMWA which was formed at Springfield, Ill., Sept. 29, 1948, during the meeting of the Mississippi Valley Medical Society in that city. The new officers promptly made the Mississippi Valley Medical Journal the official publication of the AMWA.

ONE of the problems the author faced as editor of the Quincy Medical Bulletin was to secure sufficient advertising to pay the expense of the publication. It was soon ascertained that nearly all editors of small county medical society bulletins in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri had similar troubles. In 1940 the author determined to try to do something about this but wished to remain in the background as much as possible, for already he had earned the reputation as one who had started many things and comments were common, and not too favorable, that something medically new in the area "was another of Swanberg's pet ideas." A layman from Moline or Rock Island, whose name cannot be recalled, but who was business manager or printer for the Bulletin of the Iowa-Illinois District Medical Association, was also seriously interested in this advertising problem. The author requested him to preside at a meeting to be held in Rock Island, Sept. 25, 1940, during the meeting of the Mississippi Valley Medical Society at the Fort Armstrong Hotel. The author sent letters to all editors of county medical society bulletins and small medical periodicals in Illinois, Iowa and Missouri to consider the forming of some type of organization for those interested in medical editing. Further details were left to the man from Moline or Rock Island who was to preside at the meeting. Imagine the author's complete surprise when he came to Rock Island and was unable to locate the man. He did learn the individual had been drafted into the army and had left the city a few days before the scheduled meeting. He had sent no word about his departure and, to this day, no communication has ever been received from him. In other words, the very thing occurred which the author was trying to avoid and the entire matter fell into his lap. The meeting was held in Rock Island, as scheduled, and was poorly attended, only six being present: George B. Lake, M.D., Waukegon, Ill.; Norbert C. Barwasser, M.D., Moline, Ill.; Norman Zolla, M.D., Chicago; Harold Swanberg, M.D., Quincy, Ill.; Florence Johnson, M.D., Cedar Rapids, Ia.; and James Dunn, M.D., Davenport, Ia.

After lengthy discussion, the group proposed to organize and call the new organization the Mississippi Valley Medical Editors' Association. The author was drafted to write a constitution and the following were elected tentatively, subject to their joining the Association, as the officers for the first year. The next meeting was to be held during the MVMS meeting, Oct.2-3, 1941, at the Hotel Montrose, Cedar Rapids, Ia.

(Officers First Year, Mississippi Valley Medical Editors' Association, 1940)

President *George B. Lake, M.D., Waukegon, Ill., Editor, Clinical Medicine
 Vice President *James Dunn, M.D., Davenport, Ia., Editor, Bulletin, Iowa & Illinois
Central District Medical Association
 Sec.-Treas. Harold Swanberg, M. D., Quincy, Ill., Editor, Mississippi Valley Medical J.

Executive Committee

Francis Joseph Cendella, M.D., Moline, Ill., Editor, Medical-Dental News of the Quad Cities
 *Clyde P. Dyer, M.D., St. Louis, MO., Editor, St. Louis County Medical Society Bulletin
 *Florence Johnson, M.D., Cedar Rapids, Ia., Editor, Linn County Medical Society Bulletin

Charter membership in the new Association was extended to about Nov. 1, 1941; at that time several who originally signed up dropped out. The charter was closed with these 34 members:

Walter Dayton Abbott, M. D. Des Moines, Io.	Leono de Mare East, Springfield, Ill.
*John Freeman Austin, M.D., Wichita, Kans.	Dean H. Echols, M.D., New Orleans
Norbert Clement Barwasser, M.D., Moline, Ill.	*Nelson K. Fonter, M.D., Hammond, Ind.
*John F. Casey, M.D., Boston	R. L. Gorrell, M.D., Clarion, Ia.
Francis Joseph Cendella, M.D., Moline, Ill.	George F. Gsell, M.D., Wichita, Kans.
*Beaumont S. Cornell, M.D., Ft. Wayne, Ind.	"A. F. Harrington, M.D., Cedar Rapids, Ia.
Paul E. Craig, M.D., Tulsa, Okla.	*T. F. Hersch, M.D., Cedar Rapids, Ia.
*James Dunn, M.D., Davenport, Ia.	Seldon Rae Hoover, M. D., Charleston, W. Va.
*Clyde P. Dyer, M.D., St. Louis	Julius Jensen, M.D., St. Louis

*Florence Johnson, M.D., Cedar Rapids, Ia. Murray Kornfeld, Chicago	Frank A. Riebel, M.D., Columbus, O. Kenneth H. Schnepp, M.D., Springfield, Ill.
*George B. Lake, M.D., Waukegan, Ill.	*Mathias Joseph Seifert, M.D., Chicago
*Henry Glover Langworthy, M.D., Dubuque, Ia.	*Walter Stevenson, M.D., Quincy, Ill.
*Edith Lowry, M.D., St. Charles, Ill.	Harold Swanberg, M.D., Quincy, Ill.
Elliott F. Parker, M.D., Moline, Ill.	William Harold Swanberg, B.S.M., Chicago
*E. Eugene Rice, M.D., Shawnee, Okla.	Arkell M. Vaughn, M.D., Chicago
Baxter K. Richardson, B.A., Springfield, Ill.	Nicholas Stephen Vitale, M.D., St. Louis

Meetings of the MVMEA were held in connection with the MVMS in 1941 and 1942. Because of World War #2 and its travel restrictions, no meetings were held in 1943, 1944 and 1945 but were resumed in 1946. There seemed to be little interest in the organization. In 1948, after eight years of organization, with programmed meetings in 1941, 1942, 1946 and 1947, there were only 42 members, a gain of 12 in the seven years. The author became impatient at the lack of aggressive leadership and decided to do something himself. It was suggested that the Association become a national organization, with a new name and constitution and with an appeal to all medical writers (not just medical editors) and the name American Medical Writers' Association was recommended. Special efforts were made to have an attractive program for the 1948 meeting in order to appeal for help in launching the proposed American Medical Writers' Association. Dr. Morris Fishbein, at that time Editor of The J.A.M.A. and easily the most outstanding American medical writer as well as the most articulate speaker of the profession, consented to give a two-hour course on medical writing at the meeting. The meeting was held and the American Medical Writers' Association was born. The story of the MVMEA from its origin at Rock Island, Ill., Sept. 25, 1940, to its absorption by the AMWA at Springfield, Ill., Sept. 29, 1948, is recorded in the editorial pages of the Mississippi Valley Medical Journal which are reproduced in the text.

It is interesting to record that one of the first objectives of the MVMEA, to establish a co-operative advertising bureau to serve county (and district) medical society bulletins in a way similar to that which the Co-Operative Advertising Bureau of the American Medical Association serves the state journals was accomplished. In 1956 the Medical Society Magazine Group, with headquarters at 2025 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, Ariz., offered such a service. It was organized by the Maricopia County Medical Society of Phoenix, as a co-operative, non-profit group of magazines by leading county medical societies throughout the nation. Its service is available to all county medical society bulletins. It is now (1965) advertising representative for over 150 publications, including state chapter journals of the AAGP and several area publications.

It is interesting to record that the Medical Society Magazine Group report that they commissioned, late in 1958, a nationally-known research organization to make an exacting study-analysis of reading habits of American physicians, particularly in regard to medical publications. As a result of some 10,000 questionnaires mailed out, the survey showed that county medical bulletins were the best read of all professional publications received by physicians.

*M.D.'s preceded by asterisk presumed dead; not recorded in 1965 AMA Directory.