To all FOMA District 7 Board Members,

First and foremost, I hope this communication finds you and your families all safe and healthy during this COVID 19 crisis. My family and I are doing well and handling the stay at home policy as best as we can.

The purpose of this email is to discuss our organization, FOMA District 7, and what our role will be to our members and community this year, and possibly next year if the pandemic is still a major issue in 2021.

I am communicating by E-mail, so that all members have time to think and thoughtfully respond after hearing my ideas and thoughts for the 2020 membership year

Obviously, I feel the upcoming board meetings should be cancelled, but I also believe all general meetings should be cancelled for the remainder of the year. I know this is unfortunate to our members who enjoy our quarterly dinners and events, but I believe the risk to our members, especially our retired and elderly members and their spouses and families, would be a risk not worth taking.

Our annual CME conference at LECOM in November at this time should be cancelled. For all the work we put into the organization and planning of this event, including to lock in quality speakers and asking them to travel to Sarasota, I believe would be too difficult, with little benefit, i.e. poor attendance. Also, there could be a high chance that LECOM is still on virtual only classes, thus not allowing the use of the venue – which would be perfectly understandable – but would leave us hanging in the event we wanted to pursue a live seminar. This is also NOT a license renewal year for our profession, so our average attendance would be predicted to be much lower even without a pandemic. We could find ourselves losing money with this event in a big way.

Dues notifications were expected to go out in April, but I advised Linda Kunke to postpone these notifications. I would like to propose a letter to all member stating the dues this year would be greatly appreciated, but optional, this year for the following reasons:

With the COVID crisis, money is tight for many. We have many organizations still requesting dues like FOMA and AOA not to mention our specialty societies/colleges. This undue burden on us all may have members leaving our organization moving forward, and I doubt we will be able to attract any new members this year.

The “optional” request will allow us to communicate with our members, and those who are not experiencing financial hardship, may pay their dues. We will explain in our communications about the cancellation of the general membership events, but our FOMA District 7 has monthly revolving expenses that our still required to be paid and a Web site that is still being developed and maintained that their money would go for – which is untimely for the good of our society.

Those who have already paid, we would hope that they would not ask for a refund, but if they do, I would feel obligated to refund their money. I would also ask if they would prefer to donate all or part to our organization or apply their paid dues to their next year’s dues thus reducing any large burden to our bank account.

Our email communication with our members will communicate that we are available to our members and if we can help in anyway this year, we will do what we can, and also get them in contact with state and national organizations (AOA and FOMA) for any assistance they can offer.

As far as community outreach and support, this is where I am torn. We have, at this time, no such programs and I am not sure we have the membership support or numbers to start some type of program during this crisis, as well as advertise such a program, to the community. I would appreciate any feedback on this topic, but please take into consideration when suggesting something, what will it take in both member numbers as well as member dollars prior to taking on a community project at this time. As much as I believe our organization needs a bigger presence in the community, I am not sure we are able to start one up at this time. I would love to be proven wrong.

Please respond back to these topics as well as any ideas not brought up in this communication in the next 1-2 weeks. I will sit with Linda (virtually) and discuss everyone’s ideas and comments and we will plan further communications after review before sending out letters to our members and non D.O. members.

Take care of yourselves and families.

Joseph Sassano

FOMA District 7