

BIMDA gains wide support from hospitals in region as it continues to evolve

By Ken Datzman

One of the best-known medical associations in the state of Florida is the Brevard Indo-American Medical and Dental Association, or BIMDA, which continues to evolve as an organization.

Its visibility has risen significantly through the years. Its work is notable. And its members are leaders in the medical community. Even U.S. Rep. Bill Posey (R-Rockledge) has recognized the organization for its commitment to “education and devotion to charitable giving,” saying BIMDA has “become a pillar of Central Florida.”

For more than 20 years, BIMDA has enabled physicians, dentists, and hospitals to network and collaborate in areas of medical education, philanthropy, and community service. BIMDA, an all-volunteer organization, is gearing up for a number of events it will be hosting over the next six months.

BIMDA’s work has certainly earned it plenty of supporters among the medical community, the business community, and even the political community.

One segment of the health-care industry in particular has stood behind BIMDA with its ongoing support. Early on the hospitals in the region rallied around the organization. Hospital leadership in the area saw value in the work of and in the mission of BIMDA.

One of the first hospital supporters of BIMDA was Parrish Medical Center in Titusville.

“Parrish Medical Center and BIMDA have had a longstanding relationship and aligned missions to better the provision of health care through education and collaboration,” said George Mikitarian, president and CEO of Parrish Medical Center.

Dr. Ashok Shah, an internist in Titusville and a board member of Parrish Medical Center, has been a cornerstone of BIMDA for years as its sponsorship chairman.

“I think BIMDA has achieved milestone after milestone,” said Dr. Shah, who is a former BIMDA president. “Over the last two decades, BIMDA has really blossomed. I am proud to have witnessed the tremendous growth of BIMDA in the past 20 years. It’s a great organization with strong leadership. The future of BIMDA looks bright.”

The current chairman and president of BIMDA is Dr. Pavan Kancharla, a medical oncologist with Cancer Care Centers of



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

The Brevard Indo-American Medical and Dental Association will host its first Member Appreciation Dinner Nov. 17 at the Oasis at Palm Shores in the Space Coast Association of Realtors facility. BIMDA will have its annual Medical Expo & CME Conference April 6 at the Space Coast Health Foundation’s Center for Collaboration in Rockledge. Then on April 13, BIMDA will host its annual Gala at the Hilton Melbourne Rialto Place. From left, the BIMDA team includes: Dr. Rajasri Krishnamurthy, vice president; Dr. Pavan Kancharla, president; Dr. Dinesh Patel, 2019 president-elect; Glad Kurian, a vice president with Morgan Stanley in Melbourne; Dr. Kalpana Gorthi, co-secretary; and Dr. Bhavesh Vekariya, co-secretary.

Brevard, part of the nationwide US Oncology Network.

He says “there is great interest in BIMDA’s educational programs. The continuing medical education initiative is a major part of this organization, as well as helping the community and creating awareness about health-related issues in the region.”

Bill Jenkins, the chief operating officer of University Center Imaging in Melbourne, said his business has worked with BIMDA and its members for many years. “During that time, we have witnessed numerous benefits the organization brings to our area through its educational events, charitable endeavors, and health-care networking activities. BIMDA’s efforts

to promote health, science, and technology, as well as a greater cultural awareness and appreciation, have undeniably had a positive impact on our community.”

Jenkins added, “As our local need for health-care services increases, it’s important to have united leaders in our area focused on meeting that challenge. BIMDA is certainly committed to that

objective and we look forward to their continued success and accomplishments.”

BIMDA has also reached outside Brevard County to hone relationships. Florida Hospital in Orlando is an example of that effort to extend the BIMDA brand into new markets. “We are pleased to

Please see BIMDA, page 23

32904
NEWS, INC.
BREVARD BUSINESS
PAID
US POSTAGE
STANDARD
PRESORTED



BIMDA

Continued from page 1

support BIMDA, which for more than 20 years has played a key role in advancing health-care education in Central Florida,” said Daryl Tol, Florida Hospital president and CEO. “Physicians play a vital role, and I am thankful for their dedication to bringing healing and hope to all.”

Recently, Florida Hospital’s parent company, Altamonte Springs-based Adventist Health System, announced that it will change its name to AdventHealth on Jan. 2, 2019. As one of the nation’s largest health systems with more than 80,000 employees, nearly 50 hospital campuses, and hundreds of care sites, the change to the AdventHealth name “will unite the health-care system under one connected and identifiable national system of care.”

Health First Inc. has also had a long relationship with BIMDA. Drew Rector is the chief strategy officer at Rockledge-based Health First.

“Health First is proud to support BIMDA, as both our organizations feel passionately about giving back to the community — especially when it comes to improving the wellness and health of our families, friends, and neighbors. A healthier Brevard is good for everyone,” he said.

Steward Health Care is yet another supporter of BIMDA. “Steward Family Hospitals in Melbourne and Rockledge, and Sebastian Medical Center are pleased to be affiliated with BIMDA,” said Andy Romine, president of Rockledge Regional Medical Center, part of Steward Family Hospitals.

“BIMDA’s focus on philanthropy and physician education aligns closely with Steward’s mission and values. We are honored to continue our strong partnership with BIMDA, whose charitable efforts have touched countless lives in Brevard and Indian River counties.”

In 2017 alone, BIMDA made philanthropic financial donations to a number of institutions in the area. They included the Health First Foundation, University of Central Florida Foundation, Jess Parrish Medical Foundation, Eastern Florida State College Foundation, Brevard Schools Foundation, and the Florida Institute of Technology.

“We’re proud of our philanthropic endeavors in the community,” said Dr. Rajasri Krishnamurthy, BIMDA vice president. “We see all the good we are doing in the county. It makes every BIMDA member feel proud to be associated with the organization.”

BIMDA has even had an influence on Indian physician recruitment in the region. Dr. Kalpana Gorthi, who specializes in internal medicine, including geriatric and preventive medicine, said when she was looking to relocate from Overland Park, Kan., last year one of the things she researched was Indian associations in communities. Her husband is also

a physician. He’s a cardiologist. They wanted to practice in a warm-weather state.

“We looked at and evaluated a lot of communities on practice potential and much more,” she said. “We have two young girls. So we were looking for a community where our kids could grow up, where there were good schools, good medical facilities, and where there was an Indian presence. When we did the research, we came across BIMDA. We Googled ‘Indian medical associations in Florida’ and BIMDA popped right up. We were very happy to find this organization, where Indian physicians participate in the community and give back to the community.”

She continued, “We love Brevard County. We wanted to not only locate a community where we could practice medicine, but also a community where we could retire when we ended our careers. Brevard seemed like a perfect fit for our careers and for our family. When we moved here, we received a warm welcome from the senior members of BIMDA.”

Dr. Kalpana Gorthi’s office is at Revive MD Internal Medicine on North Wickham Road in Suntree. She is affiliated with Rockledge Regional Medical Center and the Steward Healthcare Network. Dr. Gorthi serves as BIMDA’s secretary.

The three founders of BIMDA are Dr. Mahesh Soni (the first president of BIMDA), Dr. Subhash Rege, and Glad Kurian, who has served as the honorary executive director of the organization since it was formed in 1996. The organization has grown to more than 200 members.

Gaining the support of hospitals was the first step toward building BIMDA into a viable entity.

“In the early 1990s, BIMDA envisioned becoming a medical association that enabled physicians, dentists, and hospitals to network and collaborate in the areas of medical education, philanthropy, and community service,” said Kurian, a vice president with Morgan Stanley in Melbourne.

“Today, we are truly honored and blessed with the friendship of Health First, Steward Family Hospitals, Parrish Healthcare, Kindred Hospital, Florida Hospital, HealthSouth Sea Pines Rehabilitation Hospital, and we now welcome Palm Pointe Behavioral Health in Titusville, the newest hospital in Brevard County.”

To celebrate its long-running success as an organization, BIMDA will host a Member Appreciation Dinner on Saturday, Nov. 17, at the Oasis at Palm Shores. The dining facility is located in the Space Coast Association of Realtors facility on Pineda Plaza Way in Palm Shores.

BIMDA will be conferring on Dr. Ashok Shah its first “Most Valuable Physician Award” for a lifetime of “dedication and impact” on the organization’s growth. “This

award will not be repeated annually, but only when a distinctly unique occasion merits it,” said Kurian.

Dr. Rege and Dr. Soni will both receive “Lifetime Achievement Awards” from BIMDA as cofounders of the organization.

This will be the first time that BIMDA will not be hosting a Medical Expo and CME Conference in the fall. Kurian said BIMDA has shuffled its events schedule and “will open with a bang on April 6 with our annual Medical Expo and CME Conference at the Space Coast Health Foundation’s Center for Collaboration in Rockledge.”

Then a week later, on April 13, “we will follow up with our BIMDA Gala at the Hilton Melbourne Rialto Place. By doing this, we are making our events more accessible to people from across the county. We’re looking to increase attendance at both events by separating them by one week. We think it’s the right thing to do and will be more convenient for people to attend,” he said.

The April 6 Medical Expo and CME Conference is a major event for BIMDA, said Dr. Dinesh Patel, BIMDA’s 2019 president-elect. He joined the organization two years ago after relocating from Jacksonville.

“I thought one of the best ways for me to become better acquainted with physicians in this region was through BIMDA and the events it holds,” said Dr. Patel, a cardiologist in Melbourne with the practice Charles H. Croft M.D., P.A..

“When I joined BIMDA, it presented me the opportunity to have a lot more exposure to the practicing physicians in the different fields around the county, all the way north to Titusville and all the way south to Sebastian and Indian River. And in just two years I have seen BIMDA grow superbly. We are excited about the future of this organization.”

He added, “We are looking ahead to the Medical Expo and CME Conference set for April 6 and the April 13 BIMDA Gala. We are excited about our new schedule of events, as well as our upcoming Member Appreciation Dinner on Nov. 17 of this year.”

An interventional cardiologist, Dr. Patel said BIMDA’s continuing medical education program “covers the different specialties in medicine, with various experts making presentations. It’s a very convenient and a very effective format for area doctors to earn CME units.”

“The BIMDA physicians greatly enjoy attending the CME Conferences,” added Dr. Krishnamurthy, an internist with Health First Medical Group.

“I have been associated with BIMDA since I moved here from New York in 2006. The first big event I went to in Brevard County was a BIMDA conference and social gathering. That’s where I came to know a lot of my colleagues from various

practice specialties, and I have been coming to the events ever since. The continuing medical education program is a big attraction of the conference. I always look forward to it. We have top speakers in the field of medicine. The lectures are interesting and present high educational value.”

Dr. Krishnamurthy’s training includes having completed a nine-month post-graduate Fellowship in neurology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Her husband, Dr. Aravind Kumar, is a former president of BIMDA.

As part of their education, physicians spend four years in medical school and three to five years in residency training. For the rest of their careers, they rely on accredited continuing medical education as one of the support systems that helps them continuously improve their practice, while staying up-to-date on trends in their field.

“BIMDA has played a really important role over the years providing a CME platform for doctors from around Brevard County,” said Dr. Bhavesh Vekariya, a hospitalist with Health First Medical Group.

“From a doctor’s standpoint, BIMDA is one of the best organizations in Brevard County. One side of the organization is the professional CME part and the other side is social, where the doctors and their families and vendors and other supporters can gather and really enjoy themselves at BIMDA events. I have been a BIMDA member for five years and it’s been a great experience.”

A hospitalist like Dr. Vekariya specializes in caring for patients while they are in the hospital. Hospitalists work closely with the patient’s primary care provider.

“The hospitalist specialty is a growing field. It’s a subset of internal medicine. Some internal medicine doctors practice only in their offices, while some practice only inside the hospital taking care of the more sick patient population. The demand for hospitalists continues to grow and the field continues to gain visibility within the scope of internal medicine,” he said.

As it looks to 2019, BIMDA is set to embark on a new venture for the organization, said Dr. Kancharla, the 2018 president.

“We are planning to produce a medical journal. It will be peer-reviewed by BIMDA members. The journal’s content will focus on helping physicians meet the changing needs of a medical practice. A committee will be spearheading this new initiative. We may have the first issue of the journal coming out next year. We’re excited. This will be a first for Brevard County, as it relates to a publication of this type,” said Dr. Kancharla.

“As an organization, BIMDA is poised to make big strides in the year ahead,” added Dr. Patel, the incoming president of BIMDA.