



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
MEDICAL AUDIT SPECIALISTS

Fall 2018

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The Monitor

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT



Dear Members,

Wishing you many greetings of the season, and hoping that you and yours enjoy health and happiness during 2019. It has been a difficult winter season here in the west with all the fires and smoke. I find myself glued to my inhalers in order to breathe—and I am one who has never had asthma until this change in our global weather.

I can report that on November 15th and 16th, your Board of Directors met in San Antonio at the site of our next conference on the Riverwalk. This hotel wasn't built the last time we were there, and I think you will really like the property. The conference will be a dilly! We look forward to seeing you all there. It is our 25th anniversary and we have some wonderful educational and networking opportunities and fun events being planned. The board is working enthusiastically to make this a very special conference.

Twenty five years ago, in 1995, we incorporated at the first official conference in Atlanta Georgia at our general membership meeting. However, two years prior, the Texas Medical Auditors Association (TMAA), the California Medical Auditors Association (MAAC) and the Arizona Medical Auditors Association (AzMAA) met in Texas to begin the process of setting up a National Association. We consider Texas the birthplace of AAMAS, and so here we are to celebrate our 25th anniversary! It took two years of strategic planning to pull together the NMCCA (National Medical Cost Containment Association) which became AAMAS.

Through Board change and commitment changes some years ago, it was decided to move the CMAS exam out from under the AAMAS umbrella. AAMAS lost control of the exam and the working relationship with the Certification Council that regulates the exam. We are not privy to exam updates, or anything having to do with the business of the Certification Council, and we are uncomfortable with that.

Today, a new Board of Directors (a mix of the old and the new) has taken up the reins at AAMAS and has re-committed itself to growing the organization. I can assure you that this is a 100% committed Board, and one of the best and smartest Boards with which I've had the privilege to work. We will be creating a new general certification exam, allowing for grandfathering of CMAS, and in the future, we will be creating specialty certification exams. Like other certification bodies, you will need to be a member of AAMAS in order to participate in our certification.

We, like AHIMA, are a non-profit national Association which will again be certifying our professionals. Please join us in San Antonio for an exciting look at the next 25 years of a new AAMAS—a professional Association of clinical auditors and coders bridging the gap between the financial and clinical world of medical care reimbursement.

MJ LaBelle
AAMAS President

A Message From Your Past President



Holiday Greetings from Palm Springs, CA. I hope my holiday message finds you all looking forward to celebrating the season with your family and friends. It seems the time of year when people take an accounting of their life's events and measure them putting them on the good side or the not so

good side. I hope your good side is much longer than the not so good one!

As true to my character, I began decorating my house the day after Thanksgiving. Here is the tree I've put up in my office. It's one of 15 trees (I added one) that are placed in my home. It's hard to tell but many of the decorations are crystal with vintage ornaments supplementing to fill out the tree.

The BOD has been actively working on planning the conference for 2019, meeting in San Antonio, TX last month. Teresa Gulino, the program chair is reaching out, securing both speakers and exhibitors.

In addition to discussing the conference plans we also expanded our discussions and plans for the future of the organization. Strategic planning is a key component to the organization's success. Pinpointing and targeting audiences that would benefit from their association to our organization, promoting excellence in our profession.

Recently, Mary Jane and I presented at a conference in Tampa, FL. Our audience was primarily made up of physician coders, nurses and one physician. The topic of our presentation was of course hospital bill auditing. The reaction of the audience was very positive. Many of the attendees had not been exposed to this type of auditing, something quite foreign to them.

Often, we hear very dismissive attitudes towards hospital bill auditing. Here's the thing we must always remember. HBA is the foundation of all of the other types of audits (coding). CMS still finds value in HBA and sanctions payers who have Medicare Advantage plans who do not perform this function. The larger payers have audit programs either internally or through third party vendors. There's a reason, here's the scoop. As you all know DRG payments are based on costs and averaged geographically. When

charges wrongfully are added to the bill the billed amount increases, offsetting the payment amount of the DRG and inflating cost reporting. The government then adjusts their payment after some data collection and analysis.

What they discovered is no one was checking to see if the bills accurately reflected the materials and services rendered. We find ourselves circling back into why HBA is important. There isn't another type of audit that can bridge the clinical and financial sides from a provider to the payer.

Now for some fun! On top of decorating trees or any flat surface for the holidays, I bake many different things. I make up trays and bring them to friends. One of my requested treats is always my fudge.

Here's my recipe for fudge. It's almost fool proof; it's delicious and sinfully rich.

- 4 ½ C. Sugar
- 1 can evaporated milk (14.5 – 16 oz.)
- 18 oz. Chocolate Chips
- 1 C. Butter (2 sticks)
- 3 Tbsp. Vanilla Extract

Combine sugar and evaporated milk in a 3 or 4 quart heavy saucepan. Stir and cook over medium heat until mixture reaches a full rolling boil. Reduce heat if necessary but keep mixture boiling steadily for 6 minutes (this is important) Stir occasionally to prevent scorching.

In a large mixing bowl put chocolate chips, butter and vanilla. Pour the hot milk mixture into the mixing bowl and beat with electric mixer (slowly then increase speed to high). Beat the chocolate mixture until you're sure all of the butter is mixed in. The fudge is ready when drips from the beater stay on top of the mixture.

Pour the candy onto a slightly buttered pan 9x9 or 13x9 (depends on how thick you want it). Allow to cool, score into pieces and then refrigerate for several hours. This makes about 4 lbs of fudge.

Everyone have a safe and joyous holiday or all of them if you celebrate and a prosperous New Year.

David Eklof
AAMAS Past President

A Message From Your Vice President

BOARD MEETING IN SAN ANTONIO

Howdy from your Vice President!! Wow, what a wonderful working session in the lovely and exciting city of San Antonio.

The board meeting in San Antonio was a time of dedication and hard work for this team. We began our journey on Thursday, November 15th with introductions to our new Executive Director Janet Wilhelms. We proceeded with a tour of the beautiful conference space reserved at the Embassy Suites, San Antonio. The accommodations and meeting space offered by this hotel are magnificent. I'm sure many are aware of the included extras offered to guests of an Embassy Suite hotel such as the managers happy hour/snacks and free breakfast. I must add that the space provided for our conference is superior in San Antonio. They certainly are sticking to that old saying "Everything is bigger in Texas". The meeting space is also convenient to guest rooms, restrooms and the breakfast/snack area. This added convenience provides extra time and space for networking between sessions.

Our meeting work continued Friday with an all-day session of collaborative brainstorming and strategic planning. Our half day follow up session resumed on Saturday to confirm all our strategies. The devoted work of this Board is to provide its members with the best educational resources and an enlightening conference experience in 2019. If you haven't heard yet it is our 25th year and it will prove to be the best yet!

For those physically active AAMAS members, The Riverwalk provides a lovely area for an early morning run or walk. The Riverwalk area is convenient to the hotel and provides for an uninterrupted run without the usual street traffic and stop lights. There are a variety of activities nearby the hotel suitable for many activity levels.

CALL FOR REFERRALS

It's membership renewal time and what better time to refer your colleagues to join!!! Don't forget the AAMAS conference registration incentive available for up to two referrals. Our 25th Anniversary would be a fantastic time to invite a new member to join AAMAS. Please refer interested colleagues to the AAMAS website @ www.aamas.org or contact one of the board members for assistance or questions.



BOARD POSITIONS OPEN SPRING 2019

This is an exciting time to join the Board of AAMAS and contribute to our growth. If you've ever considered a position on the Board of AAMAS or thought about returning to serve the following positions will open soon.

Positions open in 2019 are:

President-Elect (*currently open and being filled by Board President, Mary Jane LaBelle RN, CMAS*)

The President-Elect shall be a voting member of the Board of Directors. The President-Elect shall work closely with the President to become familiar with the responsibilities of the office of President. The President-Elect shall perform none of the duties of the President or Vice-President. The President-Elect shall assume the office of President at the end of the annual meeting in even-numbered years.

Nominating Committee Chair (*currently open and being filled by the board*)

At least three months prior to the annual meeting, the Nominating Committee shall announce that it is receiving nominations for all officers to be elected that year. The Nominating Committee shall nominate those persons

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they consider best qualified to serve the needs of the Association. The report of the Nominating Committee shall be published to the membership at least thirty (30) days prior to the annual meeting and will be presented at the annual meeting.

**Members are ineligible to hold an elected position until they have been a member of the Association for two years. Members shall have attended at least one annual meeting. Descriptions of the positions are found on the website and are included for your convenience.

Karen Cooper RN, BSN, CMAS
AAMAS Vice President

AAMAS: Benefits to Both Payer and Provider Auditors



Membership in AAMAS creates a unique experience for auditors. There is no other organization that represents both the insurance/payer side and the provider/facility side of the billing process as well as compliance to clinical standards. We are a unique group in that most of us have a clinical background which many other revenue cycle

auditors, compliance officers and attorneys lack. Whether you do charge audits, coding audits or compliance audits, AAMAS provides continuing education, networking and job opportunities for you. The AAMAS membership and certification also demonstrates your commitment to your profession and your expertise in auditing.

The Board had several ideas that will be put into action to assist the members in meeting their professional goals and the goal of growing our professional organization!

1. **Any member who recruits a current non-member to join AAMAS will receive a \$50.00 gift certificate toward the Annual Conference fee for 2019. The gift certificate offer will be effective December 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019 and is limited to 2 per member. Please email Katie Stanford and copy Janet Wilhelms with the name of the new member(s). We will send your certificate when the new member's payment is received. (See additional details on the website) ksj1053@aol.com j.wilhelms@aamas.org**
2. The conference will feature speakers focused on the future of medicine, both clinical and financial.

3. Webinars, both original and those provided free by other organizations or companies, will be made available through the website. We hope to include topics important to payer and facility/provider auditors as well as coding auditors.
4. In addition to the job listings on the website, **exhibits at the annual meetings will include job fair booths to increase your exposure to opportunities.** We will begin offering this at the April conference in San Antonio. **Bring your business cards!**
5. The conference will include a panel on working from home, the positive aspects and the pitfalls, since so many of us do.
6. Specialty audit certification, in addition to your general certification, will be added in the future providing members with additional credentials.

These are just some of the ideas we discussed. If you have ideas to help us grow, please feel free to email us! Ksj1053@aol.com

Katie Stanford, RN, MSN, CMAS
AAMAS Secretary/Treasurer

A Jubilee – A 25th Anniversary!



Twenty years is considered a major milestone whether celebrating on behalf of an organization, a personal relationship, or just reflecting on 1994. Congratulations to all who can relate to AAMAS as they begin to embark upon their milestone, 25 years of service and support to the Medical Auditing world of US Healthcare.

As the AAMAS Program Event Committee approaches April 2019, we would like to provide some fun historical facts and symbolic information should you also feel festive this time of year. As you, or one of your own, make plans to attending our event, here are some fun facts and ideas:

- A 25th Traditional | Modern Anniversary Gift: SILVER – The Flower: IRIS
- 25 Years Ago:
 - **Bill Clinton** was serving as the 42nd US President
 - **George W. Bush** declared a candidate for Texas Governor Election
 - Movies Release: **The Lion King, Forrest Gump**

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- TV Shows: **Friends**
- Sony **Play Station** was Released
- The **Backstreet Boys** were forming their band in Florida
- Popular Songs:
 - “I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU” - **Whitney** Houston
 - “DON’T TAKE THE GIRL” - **Tim** McGraw
 - “I SAW THE SIGN” – Ace of Base
- Medication Dispensing Units aka **Pyxis** goes public taking medication inventory to a new horizon
- **DRG auditors** are in high-demand!
- **Per Capital Healthcare** Spending estimated \$3,600
- **Seventies styles** may or may not sneaked out of your closet!
- The **World Series** cancelled due to MLB Strike
- **Ronald Reagan** announces Alzheimer’s Disease
- Jeff Bezos founded **AMAZON** during his NY to WA road trip

Here at AAMAS, we recognize everything has a starting point - that milestone marker. It also may have an ending point where one determines an end on their terms, relishing in their success and ending on that high. However, if you have reflected on the past 25 years, you can clearly see most make a comeback! At AAMAS, we pride ourselves in our efforts to reawaken Medical Auditing across the US Healthcare enterprise. A refocus on innovation, a blend of new/old, you will notice a difference in us, between our board members, our website, membership or partnerships, this milestone is changing AAMAS. This up and coming conference will focus on being alert-oriented to today’s challenges, tomorrow’s innovation and celebrate the rich history of 25 years of expertise! If you dare to embrace this journey with us and stay true to one of America’s needs - Healthcare Affordability for all, join us at this conference!

Teresa Gulino
AAMAS Program Chair

AAMAS Conferences: Invaluable to my career!

The Holiday Season is fast approaching, and I want to wish you all a very Merry Christmas, and Happy Holidays! Winter has arrived here in Michigan in the form of cold and wind, but not much snow yet.

As you have read in other articles, the Board of Directors has just returned from our onsite board meeting in San Antonio, Texas. We are very excited to be back in the State where the seeds of AAMAS were first sown 25 years ago, and where we will celebrate our 25th annual conference. I can assure you that the venue for our conference next April (Embassy Suites River Walk) will meet or exceed your expectations. The location is perfect for exploring the River Walk area.

I am proud to say I have been able to attend every AAMAS conference since the first one in Atlanta in 1995. Sometimes, when I can’t sleep at night, instead of counting sheep, I try to remember the cities and years of each conference. Pathetic, I know! Atlanta, Las Vegas, New Orleans, San Francisco, Orlando, Scottsdale, Ann Arbor, Washington, D. C., San Diego, Nashville, back to Las Vegas, Houston, Williamsburg, VA, Anaheim, Denver, back to Orlando, Dallas, Phoenix, Jacksonville, FL, St Louis, Reno, Myrtle Beach, Chicago, Salt Lake City, and next year in San Antonio, the site of the original steering committee meeting in 1994. We gambled, went line dancing and to the Grand Old Opry. We went on a dinner bay cruise in San Diego and a dinner river cruise in New Orleans. We shopped in Underground Atlanta, went to Disney Land and Disney World. We saw the historic sites in Williamsburg and D. C. And last year we went to the zoo. These special events have been great fun, and also a great opportunity to network.

As an Independent Contractor, the AAMAS conferences have been invaluable to my career. Every contract I have had over the years came as a result of networking at the AAMAS conferences, and the exchange of information with other auditors was priceless. The friendships developed over the years have enriched my life, and made me feel connected to the medical audit community.

It happens that San Antonio will be in the middle of their annual Fiesta celebration. It looks like there will be plenty of opportunity to experience true San Antonio hospitality. (<https://fiestasanantonio.org/about-fiesta-san-antonio/>).

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Each evening, there is a Mariachi Festival right on the river walk. There is also plenty of nightlife to enjoy without needing transportation, just step outside your door... <https://riverwalkguide.com/nightlife/>.

Of course, the most famous spot in San Antonio is the Alamo (<https://www.history.com/topics/mexico/alamo>, <http://www.thealamo.org/visit/index.html>). See where Texas' war for independence from Mexico was waged, and where James Bowie and Davy Crockett became legends.

We are hoping to arrange another special event for Thursday evening. The event at the zoo last year was so well received, and we recognize the value of a relaxed, fun atmosphere to network in.

I am looking forward to seeing many of you in San Antonio!

Theresa Crothers
Advisor

Introducing AAMAS's New Executive Director



On behalf of the AAMAS Board of Directors, I'd like to introduce to you all our new Executive Director Janet Wilhelms. Some of you may remember Mike McManus who has been with us for many years. Mike has moved on to other opportunities and Janet attended her first board meeting. Janet has more than 20

years experience in corporate and nonprofit management, marketing, promotions, event and project management. She received her BA in Advertising/Public Relations with a minor in Business Marketing. She frequently volunteers for local charities and is in the process of receiving her CAE certification. It is a pleasure to be working with her.

MJ LaBelle
AAMAS President

NEW! Retired Membership Category

The Board of Directors has just instituted a new category of membership for those of us 65 years of age or older!! We are calling in the "Retired" membership fee. We tossed around how we would define "retired" and decided to simply go with a date of birth. We realize many of our members no longer work as auditors, but are still interested in belonging to the Association they have been active in for years.

Alternatively, many of our members who still work are over 65 years of age and we felt that it was time to give them a break (that would include some of us on the Board). So, PLEASE, join us and remain part of the AAMAS family. Here are our 2019 membership rates. More information can be found on our website: <https://www.aamas.org/membership/membership-information/>

Retired:	\$100.00
Corporate:	\$125.00 (over 3 members per company)
Regular:	\$150.00

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mary Jane LaBelle, *President*

Dave Eklof, *Past President*

Karen Cooper, *Vice President*

Katie Stanford, *Secretary/Treasurer*

Teresa Gulino, *Program Chair*

Anne Haider, *Social Media*

Theresa Crothers, *Advisor*

Janet Wilhelms, *Executive Director*

YOUR ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT TEAM

Janet Wilhelms

Executive Director
ext. 103

Courtney Harris

Association Specialist
ext. 125

Liz Kutz

Chief Financial Officer at
Association Executives Group
ext. 102

Roy Smith

Vice President of IT at
Association Executives Group

Nicole Cheever

Customer Care &
Membership Manager
ext. 116

The opinions expressed in The Monitor are those of the authors or persons quoted.
They do not necessarily reflect the views of the AAMAS Board of Directors.

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