



## So Long, 2020

*WACEP President's Message, December 2020*  
*Ryan Thompson, MD, FACEP*



As I write this message, I just scheduled my appointment to get my first COVID-19 vaccine. It feels fitting for this to be the way 2020 finally goes out – a year that has been absolutely dominated by the coronavirus pandemic. State guidelines have designated frontline healthcare workers as 1A priority for vaccination, front of the line for protection. This is far from the end of COVID-19, as viral precautions, limited opening of businesses, and mask orders are likely to continue until a large portion of the general population can be vaccinated (hopefully mid 2021). However, it does perhaps feel like the end of the beginning, as Churchill might say.

This year has been a stressful one for emergency physicians all over the state. We were thrust into a pandemic with extremely limited PPE supplies, and little to go on for treatment options other than what could be glommed together from earlier hot spots like China, Italy, and New York. We saw our volumes plummet as patients feared contamination in the hospital, only to be inevitably replaced by scores of patients suffering from the virus months later, and nowhere to admit them. Some of us caught the disease ourselves. Many of us have been called liars by patients when we tell them they contracted COVID-19, even while being placed on BiPAP machines, due to rampant misinformation. Some of us had the misfortune of seeing beloved family members, friends, and colleagues succumb to the plague.

As my tenure as WACEP President draws to a close, I want to heartily thank each and every one of you for your resilience, your dedication, and your commitment to you patients and your communities. Without you, thousands more Wisconsinites would not be with their loved ones this holiday season. What you all do matters, and that fact has never been more clear than it is now. May the light at the end of the tunnel provide you some warmth, and hope, as we enter this next phase of the pandemic.

God speed, and keep up the good work. It has been an honor to serve you.

## Quick Links

- [COVID-19 Resources](#)
- [Latest News](#)
- [Upcoming Events](#)
- [Careers in EM](#)



## Trouble Admitting that Psych Patient? Try Doc-to-Doc

One of the most common complaints that I hear from Emergency Physicians around Wisconsin is the difficulty in medically clearing patients for admission to outside psychiatric facilities. Sometimes EM docs are being asked to get serial labs for minute electrolyte abnormalities, or prolonged observation for non-toxic overdoses. This leads to delays in transfer, prolonged ED stays, agitated patients, and exasperated ED staff.

WACEP has been a part of a joint task force with Wisconsin Psychiatric Association (WPA) to help address issues germane to both our specialties. While emergency physicians struggle on one end of the transfer, every inpatient psychiatrist can share stories of a patient who decompensates shortly after arrival at their facility, so they are appropriately wary.

At the end of the day, we all want to do what is best for patients. It is imperative that we provide a thorough evaluation and appropriately diagnose and treat any comorbid medical issues in the ED prior to transfer, but what to do when you feel your due diligence has been done and you are getting pushback you feel is inappropriate?

Often the first screener for admission is a nurse or APP, and many of these requests for additional workup come from a lack of medical understanding and an abundance of caution. The psychiatrists have encouraged us to ask to speak directly to the psychiatrist on-call for a given facility if you feel that further workup is not warranted. In particular, Dr. Pope, Medical Director at Winnebago, endorses this approach.

WACEP and WPA hope that this will help to alleviate unnecessary delays, and still ensure safe hand-off of patients between EDs and psychiatric facilities.

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## WACEP Joins The Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health

*Caitlin Rublee, MD, MPH*

WACEP has followed in ACEP's lead and joined the Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health, which represents more than 60% of physicians in the U.S.

The Wisconsin chapter (Wisconsin Health Professionals for Climate Action or WHPCA), has several working groups and activities planned for the coming year. WACEP members can get involved [here](#).

A recent report, *Medical Alert! Climate Change is Harming Our Health in Wisconsin*, highlights the health and economic opportunities of transitioning to clean energy, which would result in \$21 billion per year in avoided health damages and would prevent 1,910 early deaths, 650 emergency department visits for respiratory concerns, 34,400 asthma exacerbations, and 650 heart attacks. [Read more](#).



### Wisconsin Chapter, American College of Emergency Physicians

563 Carter Ct Suite B  
Kimberly WI 54136

920-750-7725  
920-882-3655 (fax)

[WACEP@badgerbay.co](mailto:WACEP@badgerbay.co)

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## Legislative & Advocacy Update

[Read the latest advocacy report](#) from WACEP's lobbying team at Hubbard Wilson Zelenkova LLC, including:

- Election Recap
- COVID Response Legislation Proposal
- Board of Nursing Rulemaking Activity
- Surprise Billing Workgroup
- Emergency Psych Task Force Efforts
- Looking Forward

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## Last Chance to Vote for WACEP 2021 Board Members

This Friday, December 18 is the deadline to vote in the 2021 WACEP Board elections. This year's election seeks to fill three (3) Director positions, all of which are open due to expiring terms. If you haven't voted yet, [please do so today!](#)



## WACEP Spring Symposium is April 8, 2021

The 2021 Spring Symposium will be presented virtually and will again include our collaboration with UW and MCW and the Annual Wisconsin Emergency Medicine Research Forum.

A great educational lineup is in store for the conference. [Learn more and make plans to join us!](#)

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## Doctor Day 2021 is May 5 and Registration is Open

While plans are being made to shift Doctor Day to a virtual format in 2021, the event promises to offer the same important content including updates from legislative leaders, policy breakouts, priority issue briefings, a keynote presentation and of course, legislative visits! Make plans to participate on Wednesday, May 5, 2021. [Learn more and register.](#)

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