

TOP DOCTORS

From the San Diego County Medical Society

FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW, the San Diego County Medical Society (SDCMS) has partnered with *San Diego Magazine* to help identify board-certified physicians held in the highest regard by their peers. Measures of quality in healthcare are complex and vary by user and intent. SDCMS developed a transparent process, wherein *all* physicians in the county were eligible for nomination. SDCMS members then selected doctors to whom they would refer their patients and family members (2,389 ballots sent, with a 33 percent return rate).

We evolved from allowing doctors to vote only within their specialty to allowing cross-specialty voting, recognizing that practitioners often know more about the outcomes and nature of physicians in other specialties to whom we refer our own patients. We feel this more accurately reflects the views physicians have of their peers. Each honoree was reviewed to confirm board certification, Medical Board of California standing and current practice status. This year's process resulted in 371 selectees being honored by

their peers, one-third of whom are non-medical society members.

It is important to remember that without hard-quality measures—which remain elusive—no process for identifying the best physicians is ideal. There are varying opinions of the process used—by member and non-member doctors—and on whether any process is fair and accurate enough to truly identify the best physicians. Non-SDCMS physicians are welcome to be a greater part of this process and the larger functions of SDCMS by participating fully in an organization of physicians united for a healthy San Diego.

No system, however carefully constructed, is able to personalize needs for individual patients, nor to avoid use of other than quality-of-care considerations by some voters. Thus, this list is not necessarily complete, and some highly competent physicians may be missing from it.

The list should be used carefully as a *guide* to identify physicians recognized through one process, as one factor in choosing a physician for

your own needs. As in clinical-care guidelines, the best choice of a physician for a given patient may include patient-specific factors and intangibles that are best discussed with your personal physician when a referral is needed. Nurses and other healthcare professionals can add insight into selecting a physician who is well-respected and best suits your individual needs.

None of this should detract from the recognition of the doctors on this list. These physicians have been identified by their peers as doctors to whom they would entrust the care of their own precious family and patients. Among these honorees, there are 25 who have been recognized by their peers for four years in a row, and 68 for three of the past four years. There is no greater compliment one can receive from one's colleagues.

Congratulations to all of the doctors honored!

TED MAZER, M.D.
President

San Diego County Medical Society