2017 AVAHO Elections

The following members have expressed interest in participating in the leadership of AVAHO. Voting will take place at the annual business meeting on Saturday, September 16th.  
  
**President-Elect:**

Mark Klein, MD

Barbara Milner, MSN

**Secretary:**

Leah Zullig, PhD, MPH

Nicole Hedrick, MSN

**Treasurer:**

Robert Dowd, PharmD

**Board Member:**

​Hamideh Tavakoli-Ahmady, PharmD, BCOP

Charlotte Mehegan, PharmD. MBA/HCM

Kourtney LaPlant, PharmD

Shankar Giri, MD

Jimmy Ruiz, MD

Tony Quang, MD, JD

​​PRESIDENT-ELECT

Mark Klein, MD  
Organization: Minneapolis VAMC  
Position/Role: Physician- Medical/Oncology  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  AVAHO- HSR&D Committee  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board?  Yes  
Why should this individual be considered?

Mark is an active member within AVAHO, participating as a vital member of one of the   
research committees.  He is well spoken of and well respected by his peers, and is devoted to providing the highest quality of cancer care to our Veterans'.  
Mark is a good communicator, and brings valid issues to discuss to the table with realistic thoughts on improvements or resolution to problems and a solution.  
I believe he would make an excellent President for the organization and is an excellent role model to other practitioners.

Barbara Milner, MSN  
Organization: Cleveland VA Medical Center  
Position/Role: Retired Oncology CNS  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  Member at Large (2008-2010)  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board? Yes  
VA Office of Nursing Services, Oncology Field Advisory Committee (2009-2017)  
Why do you want to serve on the AVAHO Board?

Having attended the past 10 AVAHO meetings, I've seen it grow as a result of commitment and collaboration. Years ago, I worked with the founding Cincinnati oncology fellows, who envisioned the AVAHO that is today. I now have the time, experience, and leadership background to accept the "hand off" from those founders.

Please identify 2-3 areas that you feel would enhance furthering the Mission of AVAHO:

Identify/recruit oncology support members not registered, track the outcome of nurses who took the certification training offered by AVAHO (e.g. contacting each nurse who hasn't taken the exam in 60 days and assess his/her needs) and avail myself to committee members in need of support...whether it be grunt work or learning a new skill.

SECRETARY

Leah Zullig, PhD, MPH  
Organization: Durham VA  
Position/Role: Health services researcher  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  I am a former Chair of the AVAHO Health Services Research Committee and current participant. I have served with the HSR Committee for approximately 4 years.  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board? Yes  
I am a committee member for the following groups: Durham VA Institutional Review Board, University of North Carolina Health Policy and Management PhD Program, and VA CanCORS Scientific and Ethical Oversight Committee.  
Why do you want to serve on the AVAHO Board?

I want to serve as Secretary because AVAHO bridges geographic and disciplinary boundaries, giving the VA cancer community opportunities to learn about best practices and innovative research. If selected, I would work to strengthen collaborations for clinicians and researchers to partner and accomplish AVAHO’s mission, improving VA cancer care.  
  
Please identify 2-3 areas that you feel would enhance furthering the Mission of AVAHO  
AVAHO’s mission could be enhanced by: (1) funding to support collaborative research; (2) platform to increase national awareness of the high quality of VA cancer care; and (3) structured networking opportunities to connect members between annual meetings.

Nicole Hedrick, MSN  
Organization: VA Central Iowa Health Care System  
Position/Role: ARNP  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  None  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board? Yes  
Central Iowa Oncology Nursing Society  
Why do you want to serve on the AVAHO Board?

I am new to the VA system and am interested in helping to improve the oncology/hematology services provided to our veterans. I believe I will learn a tremendous amount from this organization and I have a variety of experience in oncology that I can contribute, as well.

Please identify 2-3 areas that you feel would enhance furthering the Mission of AVAHO:

Improving length of time from diagnosis to treatment for our Veterans with cancer. Better peer to peer communication between hem/onc and referring specialties. Case management from diagnosis through survivorship.

TREASURER

Robert Dowd, Pharm D  
Organization: Ann Arbor VA Medical Center  
Position/Role: Treasurer  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  Program Planning for 2016 meeting  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board? Yes  
HOPA, served on Education, and Finance committees  
Why do you want to serve on the AVAHO Board?

In my 30+ years of pharmacy practice, of which 20 have been full or part-time involvement in pharmacy practice, the landscape has been in a constant of change. New forms of therapy, expanded roles of caregivers, and more make oncology practice challenging. My goal would be to help all of us to excel in treating our veterans with superior care.

Please identify 2-3 areas that you feel would enhance furthering the Mission of AVAHO: Expanded educational opportunities, opening roadblocks to high level care

Short Bio  
Have worked in many roles as a pharmacist, the longest being in oncology through the VA system. I've seen things from the retail, small hospital, large teaching hospital, IT, and clinical pharmacy angles. Currently work with the Hematology, Oncology, and Palliative Care teams at the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System.

BOARD MEMBER

Hamideh Tavakoli-Ahmady, PharmD, BCOP  
Organization: VA Loma Linda  
Position/Role: Oncology Pharmacy Program Manager  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  None  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board? Yes  
VA Loma Linda Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee; VA Cancer Committee, Pharmacy Residency Board; CA Society of Health Systems Pharmacists- Board member & CE COMMITTEE; recently elected to Colton, CA City Council  
Why should this individual be considered?

The AVAHO Board & membership would be lucky to have Dr. Hamideh Tavakoli-Ahmady as a Board member.  She is a good listener to her patients, their families & with her professional colleagues. She is a critical thinker & questions the status quo when appropriate.  She acknowledges what she doesn't know...then is tenacious to learn it! She has initiated many QI activities which have improved care & reduced cost. Hamideh is active in her professional society & now represents the community in which she lives as an elected Commissioner.  She is physically active & encourages others to challenge themselves in this regard.

Charlotte Mehegan, PharmD. MBA/HCM  
Organization: VA  
Position/Role: oncology specialist  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  None  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board? Yes  
MultiCare - Chair and Co-Chair IRB  
Why do you want to serve on the AVAHO Board?

I would like to contribute to the organization with ideas, experience, improve oncology care throughout the VA healthcare.

Please identify 2-3 areas that you feel would enhance furthering the Mission of AVAHO:

Increase research at the VA by working to enroll more patients who can qualify for research. Increase educational activities to provide pharmacists/nurses with more CE available (directed at oncology). Enhancing professional careers - expanding the oncology pharmacist role to help improve patient care.

Kourtney LaPlant, PharmD  
Organization: VISN 8 - VHA  
Position/Role: Clinical Pharmacy Program Manager for Oncology- VISN 8 PBM  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  None  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board? No  
Why should this individual be considered?

Dr. LaPlant has a long history of providing excellent clinical care in the Gainesville VA. She has also served as leader in numerous projects to improve the quality of oncology care in the VA.  As a result of this, and her leadership skills, she has recently been promoted to a VISN level position. She is an asset to any organization. She will contribute a great deal.

Shankar Giri, MD  
Organization: Jackson VAMC  
Position/Role: Chief Radiation Oncology  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  None  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board? Yes  
SWOG and ASTRO  
Why do you want to serve on the AVAHO Board?

I believe I can contribute to the further development of AVAHO especially in the education and scientific components.

Please identify 2-3 areas that you feel would enhance furthering the Mission of AVAHO:

Increase participation so that all modalities are well represented, education as a resource for current trials and literature; include Recruit Residents; develop a Nursing/NP sub-committee for their practice and education, others such a technologists, A/O who can give input for better function of our departments.

Jimmy Ruiz, MD  
Organization: Salisbury, NC - VAMC  
Position/Role: Asst Chief of Medicine, Chief Hem/Onc  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  Clinical Trials  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board? Yes  
North Carolina Oncology Association - Board Member  
Why do you want to serve on the AVAHO Board?

I would like to serve the organization through support of its mission, policies, and to move forward on priorities set by the organization. These include clinical trials, research and other new initiatives. I am clinician and researcher with experiences that have given me a broad understanding of the scientific landscape.

Please identify 2-3 areas that you feel would enhance furthering the Mission of AVAHO:

Clinical trials in Oncology within VA; collaborative Efforts with National Organizations; precision Oncology

Tony Quang, MD, JD  
Organization: VA Puget Sound Health Care System  
Position/Role: Radiation Oncologist  
Previous AVAHO Board position?  Board Member, and Chair of Communications Committee and Member of the Bylaws Committee  
Have you served on another organization’s Committee or Board? Yes  
Chair of the VA Puget Sound IRB; Chair of Young Physician Section and Board Member of the Washington State Medical Association; Member of the Scientific Education Council, Bylaws Committee, and IHERO of the American Society of Radiation Oncology  
  
Short Bio:  
I am a Radiation Oncologist at the Seattle VA and hold a joint appointment as Associate Professor of Radiation Oncology in the University of Washington School of Medicine, Adjunct Associate Professor of Law in the University of Washington School of Law, and Visiting Lecturer at Bellevue College.  I serve as Chair of the VA IRB. I enjoy teaching oncology to student, residents, and radiation therapists.  I enjoy conducting research to ensure Veterans are getting state of the art and cutting-edge care. With my legal background as a lawyer, I enjoy effecting health care policies, such as universal health care, to further the quadruple aim of patient care access, cost reduction, quality improvement, and health care professionals' well-being.           

Why do you want to serve on the AVAHO Board?

As an AVAHO Board member for the last 2 years, I served as Communications Chair to acquire new contracts to revamp our website.  I have assisted in re-drafting of the Bylaws. And in my role as the only lawyer on the Board, I have assisted with contracts review and have offered my recommendations on other administrative matters

Please identify 2-3 areas that you feel would enhance furthering the Mission of AVAHO:

To see the successful transition of website development efforts to our recently hired CEO; to work with our President-Elect on the project to show case VAs best practices; to recruit interdisciplinary members in their respective areas of expertise to bring collaboration and value to our organization.