

# Wisconsin Society of Addiction Medicine

*A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine*

## OCTOBER 2021

### President's Message

Greetings!

This is truly a remarkable time to be in the field of addiction. The last few years have been challenging for many of us. It can seem we are adrift in an ocean of misinformation and we can easily become overwhelmed by keeping up with new information and getting caught in the undertow.

It is also true that there is growing recognition among our elected leaders that this epidemic within a pandemic needs to be addressed in new and integrative ways. We are acutely aware that addiction touches EVERY aspect of a person's life – so too does the work of WISAM.



WISAM is a welcoming group of professionals from all disciplines involved in treating addictions. WE have become a strong organization through the efforts of, among many, Dr. Aleksandra Zgierska, Dr. Michael Miller, Dr. Nameeta Dookeran (as I write this, I see that two of the three are out of state, and one is close to retirement!), and most recently, our now just past-president, Dr. David Galbis-Reig. We have focused much of our energy on education efforts – waiver trainings, our now annual conference, our monthly open exchanges, webinars, just to name a few. We have become the go-to organization for issues related to addiction and its treatment for Wisconsin. We are supported by ASAM, and our growing membership. Through my past years of being involved with WISAM, I can credibly say that we love rational, evidence-based discussions about approaches to a very irrational disease. There are many ways for you to be involved – just find a board member and talk about your interests and how these can be nurtured in our community.

We know that it is not always enough to provide only life-saving medications to treat addictions; there is often also needed an entire rebuilding of support systems to help the person develop healthier means of coping with difficult situations and emotions. This focus on multi-disciplinary collaboration is what I hope to continue with the work of WISAM- to support meaningful interaction and connection between rural, system-based and busy private practice addiction providers, counselors, therapists, and nurses alike. Certainly there are things about our society's current priorities in treating addiction that are lacking- and we need to differentiate between what we must accept and what issues we need to bring our voices and expert opinions to the table to effect change.

A little about me: I was born in India, raised in Iowa; have a degree in ceramic engineering from Iowa State University; volunteered with the Peace Corps in Nepal; went to medical school and got a public health degree at the University of Iowa, then psychiatry residency

and addiction fellowship at the University of Wisconsin- Madison. I have been working at UnityPoint Meriter since 2013, and continue to help with the UW Addiction Psychiatry and Medicine fellowship programs. I have a strong grounding in integrative approaches, and cultivate my own mindfulness practice, both at work and at home with my husband and children.

I remain interested in advocating for the under-represented voices at the table of medicine and society, and love the possibility of engaging with the community to create novel ways to address common problems.

Through these experiences, I bring an ability to look at both the ocean and the waves, from the beach and in the water. With my public health background, I like to think I also appreciate the 10,000 foot perspective on the many ways that societal priorities intersect with addiction and its treatment. You can expect from me a level of engagement that I hope will encourage you to also be more involved.

Please reach out with ideas of how we can support you in being more involved with WISAM. Interested in policy? See below to connect with Dr. Salisbury-Afshar. Interested in special interest topics, like caring for the pregnant person who uses substances? There are a number of us interested in and advocating for these issues with other community members- Dr. Atluru, Dr. Afshar, and me. We ask that you notice your interest areas, and then ask how we are involved or how we can be involved with efforts in that area.

I look forward to the next 2 years as president of WISAM and working with all of you!

Sincerely,  
Ritu Bhatnagar, M.D., M.P.H.

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## WISAM 2021 Virtual Conference Recap

WISAM held the 2021 Virtual Conference on Friday, October 15 and Saturday, October 16th. The conference was held virtually and drew attendees and exhibitors from across the state. Conference Chair Melissa Milne, DNP, APNP, FNP-BC, CARN-AP and Co-Chair Charles Schauburger, MD kicked off the meeting. Feel free to review the conference schedule by visiting our [website](#). WISAM leaders also hosted the Annual Business Meeting where we provided membership with an annual review and the board of directors transitioned positions. Thank you to all of our presenters, attendees and exhibitors who were able to join us!

### **Save the Date**

WISAM 2022 Annual Conference  
October 13-14, 2022  
Pyle Center - Madison, WI

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## Welcome New Board Members!

WISAM is pleased to announce the incoming [Board of Directors](#) 2021-2023!

- **President:** Ritu Bhatnagar, MD
  - **President-Elect:** Subhadeep Barman, MD, FASAM
  - **Immediate Past-President:** David Galbis-Reig, MD, DFASAM
  - **Treasurer:** Elizabeth Salisbury-Afshar, MD MPH FAAFP FACPM DFASAM
  - **Secretary:** John Ewing, MD
  - **Member-At-Large:** Matt Felgus, MD, DFASAM
  - **Early Career Physician:** Sreevali Atluru, MD
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## Thank You to our Outgoing Board Members!

Thank you to our outgoing board members: **Dr. Mark Lim** (Secretary), **Dr. Brian Lochen**

(Member at Large), **Dr. Dana Marlowe** (Early Career Physician Rep) and **Dr. Nameeta Dookeran** (Education Chair). Thank you for your service and leadership to the board, WISAM and to treating addiction in Wisconsin!

A special thank you for **Dr. David Galbis-Reig** for leading WISAM as President in two of the most difficult years. He lead us through the pandemic and two virtual conferences. Thank you for your leadership!

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## Public Policy Committee

WISAM is looking for individuals who are interested in becoming more involved in the Public Policy Committee. Our current Chair, Dr. Elizabeth Salisbury-Afshar, is ready to help lead a team with a keen interest in public policy matters around issues that affect addiction medicine, the practice of addiction medicine, and public policies that may impact the social determinant of health for our patients. **Please contact us in order to get connected and learn more about the opportunities we have available to get involved.**



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## WMS | Society Testifies on Fentanyl Testing Strips Bill

"WISAM President and Society member Ritu Bhatnagar, MD appeared before the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety and gave excellent written and verbal testimony describing what she sees in her practice as Medical Director for NewStart, Unity Point Health-Meriter Hospital's addiction treatment service branch.



"I have taken care of people whose lives have been turned upside-down by having a legal charge related to the possession of these fentanyl test strips," Dr. Bhatnagar testified. "They have had a very difficult time, then, once they're in treatment with me, trying to get their lives back together, look for work, try to find anything else with this on their record.

"Everything you've heard today about needing to have these (FTS) decriminalized so that people don't enter the criminal legal system is absolutely essential because of the differential enforcement that's happening around the state," Dr. Bhatnagar said."

[Read Full Statement](#)

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## Time to Renew your WISAM Membership!

In order to renew your membership with WISAM, please [visit the ASAM website and log-in.](#)

WISAM continues to work towards advancing the field of Addiction Medicine in Wisconsin through educational opportunities, creating a professional network, and the sharing of scientific information.



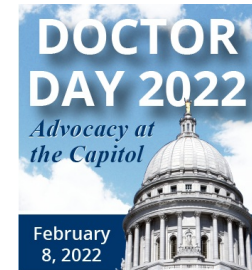
Membership  
JOIN | RENEW

[WWW.WISAM-ASAM.ORG/](http://WWW.WISAM-ASAM.ORG/)

## Wisconsin Doctor Day

Doctor Day will take place at the Monona Terrace in Madison, WI and include a keynote presentation, priority issue briefing, policy breakouts and of course legislative visits!

The multi-specialty nature of Doctor Day makes Wisconsin's annual physicians' advocacy event unique compared to similar events across the country. Physicians and medical students from nearly 20 different physician organizations annually participate in Doctor Day.



Learn first-hand how you can make a difference in the legislative process! Save the Date to participate in Doctor Day. [Click here for more information.](#)

## Helpful Links

[WISAM Website](#)

[WISAM Event Calendar](#)

[WISAM News](#)

[ASAM Website](#)

[Membership Information](#)

[ASAM CME Events](#)



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