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# NYSSMA Today

NEW YORK STATE SOCIETY OF MEDICAL  
ASSISTANTS

Affiliate of American Association of Medical Assistants  
(AAMA)

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's Message.....	2
Letter From the Editor .....	3
Tick Season in NYS.....	4-5
Lyme Disease.....	6
Student Corner.....	7

[www.nysmedassist.org](http://www.nysmedassist.org)

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Greetings!

I hope everyone is doing as well as they can be under current circumstances and challenges.

In response to the physical distancing directives issued by the CDC and the continuing and evolving Executive Orders issued by Governor Cuomo in association with New York Pause, many of the things to which we look forward have been canceled or postponed indefinitely to protect community health during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the annual **NYSSMA Convention** and **General Assembly**. Additionally, many NYSSMA (and AAMA) processes have moved to remote formats where possible.

In light of this unprecedented disruptive time in our lives and in the interest of public health, the **NYSSMA Executive Board** met on May 23 via WebEx and has decided to hold an electronic vote to select its officers and **Third NYSSMA Delegate** to the **AAMA House of Delegates** for 2020-21 in time to submit an updated roster of Officers and Delegates to AAMA by the extended deadline of **July 1**.

For transparency and to avoid any perception of conflict of interest, **NYSSMA Website Committee Chair, Lisa McKeen** will use the current NYSSMA roster to create a list serve to coordinate this effort and will receive your selection from the **Slate of Candidates** whose credentials were reviewed by the **Nominating Committee**.

Per NYSSMA bylaws, **Vice-President Carrie Gravelle** will serve as **NYSSMA President** for 2020-21. The remaining **Slate of Candidates** running for positions as NYSSMA officers include:

**Kimberly Battaglini** for the office of **Vice President**

**Susan Schilling** for the office of **Treasurer**

Candidates nominated for **Third NYSSMA Delegate** to the 64<sup>th</sup> AAMA House of Delegates in Lake Buena Vista September 11 – 14, 2020 include:

Todd Lasher

Valerie Richards

Cindy Ryder

David Sylvia

Once the form is received, open the MS Word document and make selections by choosing them from the drop down boxes. After completing the form, save it as a .pdf file and email it to **nyssma@nysmedassist.com**. All voting must be completed by **June 15**.

Due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding everything in our world, we are unable to reschedule the convention or alternate face-to-face meetings until the phased reopening of the New York State economy is complete and we can secure a venue that can accommodate our needs. The New York State Society cannot move forward before New York State does.

I realize there is a lot of uncertainty in these trying times, but the NYSSMA continuously provides opportunities to welcome new leadership and I invite anyone interested in an appointment to the Board or any of its committees to reach out to our next NYSSMA President,

**Carrie Gravelle** (Erie Chapter) for information regarding openings and qualifications for these positions.

I look forward to serving as Immediate Past President and wish President Gravelle a year filled with exciting new challenges and possibilities as we learn and grow from recent experiences. Until then, I extend hope for good health, happiness and prosperity to all my NYSSMA family of friends and colleagues. Please continue to monitor the **NYSSMA website** ([www.nysmedassist.org](http://www.nysmedassist.org)) and the **NYSSMA Today** newsletter for updated information.

Take time to breathe—we are all living day by day and moment to moment, managing one day at a time. Be patient, be not discouraged and stay safe.

In solidarity,

B. David Sylvia, BBA, CMA  
(AAMA)  
NYSSMA President 2018-2020



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The arrival of warmer weather in combination with stay-at-home orders has reminded me of something noteworthy: ticks and Lyme Disease. May just also happened to be National Lyme Disease Awareness Month.

I cringe thinking about the little hitchhikers, but at the risk of sounding cliché, knowledge is power.

It doesn't hurt to be aware of certain risks while we're spending more time outdoors and what to do if you should encounter them on you, your kids, or your pets. Although not every tick carries the bacterium which causes Lyme Disease it is helpful to be aware of the signs and symptoms of this enigmatic illness.

Stay healthy this summer!

Best,

Heather Kazmierczak, BFA, CMA (AAMA)

*NYSSMA Today* Editor

## NYSSMA

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## CPR Is Worth AAMA- Approved CEUs

Although CPR certification is no longer required for CMA (AAMA) recertification, applicants can use CPR certification for AAMA recertification points.

Two-year CPR cards issued within the applicant's recertification period will be counted for four clinical AAMA recertification points. Up to three two-year CPR cards may be submitted for a total of 12 CEUs.



## TICKS DON'T DO SOCIAL DISTANCING: COVID-19, LYME DISEASE CAN LOOK SIMILAR

BY AARON CERBONEADIRONDACK DAILY ENTERPRISE

MAY 24, 2020

**T**ick season is heating up in the Adirondacks, and while most people are focused on not contracting COVID-19 right now, local physicians, infectious disease experts and tick-borne illness experts are worried people may forget that another danger lurks in the woods.

Tick-borne illnesses such as Lyme disease, babesiosis or anaplasmosis have symptoms that overlap with those of COVID-19: fever, weariness and a nondescript unwellness.

These diseases do not, however, include a cough, like COVID-19 does.

“Providers will now have to consider tick-borne disease and COVID if patients present with an isolated fever,” Elizabeth Rogers, a spokeswoman for Elizabethtown Community Hospital wrote in an email.

“The dynamics change with the season,” ECH’s Director of Primary Care Dr. Rob Demuro wrote in an email to Rogers. “We are approaching tick season, and a year ago with an isolated fever, we would consider tick-borne illness. Now you have to keep in mind COVID. Fortunately, we have improving processes in place to evaluate and test potential COVID patients.”

Ticks have been spreading into the Adirondacks — evidenced by the work of Paul Smith’s College professor Lee Ann Sporn’s students, who have collected data for the state over the past few years. The arachnids are able to survive in more northern climates and at higher altitudes than before, and their populations are expanding — as are the types of diseases they carry.

“COVID is not the only thing we have to worry about in our area,” Dr. Keith Collins, an infectious disease specialist at Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital in Plattsburgh, wrote in an email to Sporn. “In fact, many of the laboratory abnormalities that accompany COVID-19 can also be seen with tickborne illnesses, truly inviting confusion.”

Lyme disease is notoriously difficult to diagnose. Sporn said there is no way to test for it early on, but if it is left untreated, it can have harsh effects on the body. Because there is no early test for Lyme disease, patients rely on diagnosis by health care professionals.

Lyme does not always present with its signature “bull’s-eye” rash. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rash shows up in around 70% of cases, but that varies by region.

In addition to Lyme, Sporn said last year there were 50 cases of anaplasmosis in Essex County, and one fatality. Anaplasmosis has a 10% fatality rate, she said, and the elderly and immunocompromised are at risk, same as with COVID-19.

Sporn said it is children, specifically in the 5 to 9 age range, who are most likely to contract Lyme disease, likely because of their behavior.

Kids are more likely to roll around in a pile of leaves, she said.

Local legislators are reporting that many summer residents retreated to their second homes early this year because of the coronavirus. This time of year is more dangerous for tick bites than later in the summer, Sporn said, because the adults are out now after the winter and will be laying nymphs soon, which for some reason are more common to carry diseases.

Sporn said many seasonal residents come from downstate or Western New York, where tick populations are significantly larger. This is similar to how the number of COVID-19 cases have been more serious in those parts of the state, too.

Despite this, Sporn said visitors should not have a cavalier attitude about the risks both pose here. Though there are fewer ticks than in other parts of the state, she said, the risk of transmission is just as high.

Sporn said she's heard from people saying they've seen a lot of ticks already — mostly on pets.

Physicians and the state Department of Environmental Conservation are warning people to socially distance themselves in the woods, even though they are less likely to catch the novel coronavirus in the great outdoors than in a contained space. But ticks do not like to socially distance. They cling to tall grasses and forest underbrush, waiting for a host to walk by and pick them up.

Once on a host, they find the warmest, dampest area to call home (often the armpits, hair or groin) and latch on to suck blood.

Ticks are not born with diseases, but they pick them up throughout their lives as they go around biting animals. These diseases can then be

transmitted to the humans they bite.

Sporn recommends wearing tick “personal protective equipment” when out in the woods. Light colors are best so one can see dark-colored ticks on them. She said other precautions echo what people are already doing to avoid COVID-19.

Tall socks are like N95 masks for your ankles. Keeping the lower legs covered does not give ticks anywhere to attach themselves. Pants should be tucked into socks to keep ticks from climbing up socks onto legs.

Sporn said putting on bug spray is like lathering up with hand sanitizer or soap when you go out. She said any insect repellent, even natural ones, work. For something stronger, there is permethrin, which kills insects as well as ticks. Sporn said permethrin-soaked clothes are a good deterrent against ticks.

Vigilance is important. She said after any jaunt

through the woods, people should shower and check themselves all over for ticks.

Sporn's tick collection research season begins soon, and in the fall her students will analyze the data. Through the summer, she, her son Jake and a small group of volunteers will drag the forest for ticks, and keep the specimens they find in alcohol to be sent to labs.

Sporn said it is important to maintain this research each year because gaps in data can impede progress. She said there were no big surprises in the data last year but that the continued spread of ticks through the north country is continuing.

The lone star tick, whose bite can cause a meat allergy, has been spreading in Central New York, but Sporn said none have been found in the north country so far.<sup>1</sup>

**[ DID YOU KNOW? ]**

A Lyme disease vaccine is no longer available. The vaccine manufacturer discontinued production in 2002, citing insufficient consumer demand. Protection provided by this vaccine diminishes over time. Therefore, if you received the Lyme disease vaccine before 2002, you are probably no longer protected against Lyme disease. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cerbone, Aaron. “Ticks don’t do social distancing: COVID-19, Lyme disease can look similar.” *NNY360*. [https://www.nny360.com/communitynews/healthmatters/ticks-don-t-do-social-distancing-covid-19-lyme-disease-can-look-similar/article\\_f3a303d8-2ba4-5e06-b053-ee610d821fee.html](https://www.nny360.com/communitynews/healthmatters/ticks-don-t-do-social-distancing-covid-19-lyme-disease-can-look-similar/article_f3a303d8-2ba4-5e06-b053-ee610d821fee.html). 26 May 2020.

<sup>2</sup>CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/prev/vaccine.html>. 29 May 2020.

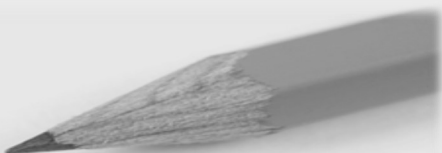
## Prepare for the Revised Content Outline

To ensure that the CMA (AAMA)® Certification Exam continues to adequately cover the necessary medical assisting topics and to accurately reflect the knowledge needed as a medical assistant, an occupational analysis is periodically conducted; the findings of this analysis shape the exam.

As a result of the AAMA 2018–2019 Occupational Analysis of Medical Assistants, a new edition of the Content Outline for the CMA (AAMA)® Certification Exam has been published by the Certifying Board of the AAMA and is available on the website.

What's the biggest difference between the two content outlines? Notably, the percentage of clinical competency questions has increased (47% to 59%), while the percentages of general (28% to 21%) and administrative (25% to 20%) questions have decreased.

**Note:** The updated Content Outline will go into effect on July 15, 2021. If you plan to take the CMA (AAMA) Certification Exam before July 15, 2021, you should continue to use the previously published Content Outline to study for the exam. If you will take the exam on or after July 15, 2021, use the updated Content Outline.



## STAGES OF LYME DISEASE

GLOBAL LYME ALLIANCE

**L**yme disease occurs in three stages: early localized, early disseminated and late disseminated. However the stages can overlap and not all patients go through all three. A bulls-eye rash is usually considered one of the first signs of infection, but many people develop a different kind of rash or none at all. In most cases, Lyme symptoms can start with a flu-like illness. If untreated, the symptoms can continue to worsen and turn into a long-lived debilitating illness.

### Stage 1: Early Localized Disease

Symptoms with early localized (or acute) Lyme disease may begin hours, a few days or even weeks after a tick bite. At this point, the infection has not yet spread throughout the body. Lyme is the easiest to cure at this stage. Symptoms may include:

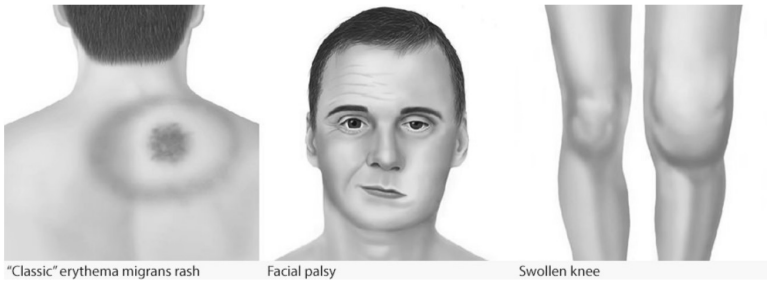
- skin rash, which may or may not look like a bull's eye
- flu-like illness, including chills and fever
- fatigue
- headache and stiff neck
- muscle soreness and joint pain
- swollen lymph nodes
- sore throat

### Stage 2: Early Disseminated Lyme

Early disseminated Lyme may occur several weeks or months after the tick bite. Bacteria are beginning to spread throughout the body. In addition to flu-like symptoms, this stage is often characterized by increase in symptoms such as:

- chills
- fever
- headaches
- fatigue
- pain, weakness or numbness in the arms, legs
- vision changes
- heart problems, such as palpitations, chest pain

- rash may appear on body
- facial paralysis (Bell's palsy)



"Classic" erythema migrans rash

Facial palsy

Swollen knee

### Stage 3: Late Disseminated Lyme Disease

If Lyme disease isn't promptly or effectively treated in the first two stages, late disseminated (post-treatment, chronic, or neurological) Lyme occurs weeks, months or even years after the tick bite. The Lyme bacteria have spread throughout the body and many patients develop chronic arthritis as well as an increase in neurological and cardiac symptoms. Symptoms may include:

- arthritis in joints or near the point of infection
- severe headaches or migraines
- vertigo, dizziness
- migrating pains that come and go in joints/tendons
- stiff, aching neck
- sleep disturbances, insomnia
- disturbances in heart rhythm
- mental foginess, concentration issues
- numbness in the arms, legs, hands or feet
- problems following conversations and processing information
- severe fatigue<sub>3</sub>

## Student Corner

Karen Borrasca has chosen to study Medical Assisting at Erie Community College.

Pursuant to a career with a projected employment rate of 23% over the next ten years, Karen describes her reasons for pursuing a career in Medical Assisting, "I am friendly and outgoing. I enjoy comforting others in time of need and making people happy." When asked how she feels about being responsible for people's wellbeing, Karen states "I feel fulfilled when I can put someone's anxieties at ease and make someone smile and laugh."

When asked which side of the medical career she enjoys more, Karen explains, "Although I enjoy both the clinical and administrative aspects of the career. I am task oriented and enjoy moving around a lot throughout the day, so I feel a clinical career choice would be the most fulfilling for me. When asked how she feels about making a career change this late in her life Karen mentions that "while it has been difficult balancing a family, house, working, and bills while attending school and studying, that is has been a great experience. She recommends to anyone thinking of making a career change later in their life that Medical Assisting is a fun and engaging career choice.

When asked if she will continue her education after she graduates Karen states that she is content with her career choice at this time. She is excited about her daily tasks and experiences.

Karen says, "I plan to accept more responsibility as I grow in my career and continue my education through the classes and seminars of AAMA so that I can continue advancement in my career.

-Karen Borrasca, 2020

<sup>3</sup>"Stages of Lyme Disease." *Global Lyme Alliance*. <https://globallymealliance.org/about-lyme/diagnosis/stages/>. 26 May 2020.

## GET INVOLVED

**Rub Elbows** | Connect with colleagues at local and state programs and events. Meet a mentor for lunch. And, once you get home, shoot off a quick e-mail to the people you've met or heard speak at a session. Build lasting professional friendships.

**Boost Your Job Leads** | At least 60 percent of all jobs are found through networking, according to About.com. As a member of the AAMA, you'll meet other medical assistants who are working in the field. Talk to them. Let them know if you're looking for employment opportunities.

<https://www.aama-ntl.org/membership/benefits>

## JUST FOR FUN...SUMMER READING

**Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know about the People We Don't Know**  
by Malcom Gladwell

How did Fidel Castro fool the CIA for a generation? Why did Neville Chamberlain think he could trust Adolf Hitler? Why are campus sexual assaults on the rise? Do television sitcoms teach us something about the way we relate to each other that isn't true?

In the audiobook version of *Talking to Strangers*, you'll hear the voices of people he interviewed—scientists, criminologists, military psychologists. Court transcripts are brought to life with re-enactments. You actually hear the contentious arrest of Sandra Bland by the side of the road in Texas. As Gladwell revisits...the trial of Amanda Knox, and the suicide of Sylvia Plath, you hear directly from many of the players in these real-life tragedies. There's even a theme song – Janelle Monae's "Hell You Talm-bout."

Something is very wrong, Gladwell argues, with the tools and strategies we use to make sense of people we don't know. And because we don't know how to talk to strangers, we are inviting conflict and misunderstanding in ways that have a profound effect on our lives and our world.

<https://www.littlebrown.com/titles/malcolm-gladwell/talking-to-strangers/9780316478526/>

## Talking to Strangers



Malcolm  
Gladwell

#1 NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author of *OUTLIERS*  
and host of the podcast *REVISIONIST HISTORY*

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