



UAPA Newsletter

“A Unified Voice”

July 2009 Vol. 2 Number 3

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Sarcoma Claims Stalwart Representative of the PA Profession

James "Jim" Baker Meeks, beloved husband, father, grandfather and brother, passed away on Tuesday, April 28, 2009 after a 15-month battle with spindle-cell sarcoma, a rare cancer. He was born October 11, 1956, in Concord, CA, the third child of Arden Earl Meeks and Dixie Ann Baker. Jim married his high-school sweetheart, Patricia Jo Godfrey, on August 18, 1978 in the Salt Lake Temple after serving a two-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He served in numerous church callings, especially cherishing his time as Bishop of the BYU 53rd Ward from 2004 - 2007.

Jim began his career as a proud firefighter/paramedic for the Salt Lake County Fire Department, where he worked for eight

years before completing the Physician Assistant program at the University of Utah in 1992. He also served briefly in the Army Reserve before being released honorably due to a serious injury to his hand. Jim practiced as a PA from 1992 - 2008, when his illness prevented him from working further.



Jim Meeks, PA-C
1956-2009

He tirelessly worked for the advancement of his profession, and among other roles, served as President of the AFPPA from July 1, 2008 to the day he died. He received many awards and honors, including Utah Public Employee of the Year in 1990, Utah Physician Assistant of the Year in 1995, and Distinguished Fellow of the AAPA in 2008.

No matter how busy he was Jim always made time for the greatest love in his life, his wife and family. His mother, father, stepmother Sherry Carr Meeks, and a sister preceded Jim in death. He will be greatly missed by his loving wife, Patricia; devoted children, Clint (Jen), Mariah (Enrique), Coleton, Clayton, Makell;

adoring grandchildren, Boston and Roman; seven siblings, and all those who knew him. Donations may be sent to ATTN: University of Utah, c/o Dr. Chen/Gouw's Sarcoma Research, 540 Arapeen Drive, Ste. 250, SLC, UT 84108.

Adapted from the Salt Lake Tribune

Eulogy Delivered at Jim Meek's Funeral by Bob Bunnell, MS, PA-C

It is a privilege to talk today about one of the most unique, creative, courageous and service-oriented PAs I have ever known.

For the past 19 years, I have known Jim in a variety of settings - student, practicing PA, educator, administrator, church leader and solid family man. In every setting he excelled and served with energy and enthusiasm.

I met him first during his years as a PA student at the University of Utah. He was ever eager to learn. But what I found most remarkable was his willingness to serve. Even in the pressured environment of PA school, he put others first. His paramedic background prepared him to be a teacher to his fellow students, a role he unselfishly fulfilled.

Don Pedersen, Director of the Utah Physician Assistant Program, reports that while Jim was a student, he helped him reformat the national newsletter for the Association of Physician Assistant Programs. Jim's creativity and sense of style significantly upgraded the look and

Contents

Jim Meek's Obituary	1
Jim Meek's Eulogy	1
President's Message	3
Executive Director's Message	3
Past President's Message	4
2009 UAPA Elections	4
AAPA Western Region Director	4
Mesquite 2009	4
Snowbird 2009	5
Utah PA Spotlight	5
UPAP Accreditation	6
Correction	6

feel of the newsletter - which was the forerunner of the now national peer-reviewed journal for the profession.

Upon completion of his PA training, Jim moved into a challenging opportunity in emergency medicine and family medicine in Phoenix, Arizona. Family needs brought him back to Utah. Jim had the courage to move to a rural town in Utah and there provided family and emergency medicine care - a challenge many of us would shun due to the difficulties associated with long hours and a difficult caseload in a remote setting. He thrived in that setting and accepted additional responsibilities in clinic management. Jim also opened his practice to PA students, and taught many the realities of rural PA practice.

This level of service got into his blood. He continued to serve in the emergency department in that distant setting on a part-time basis for ten years, long after he moved his family one final time to a larger city.

While he was working in family practice in Phoenix in the early 1990s, with an office manager who was a stickler for correct coding, the idea to start a company teaching medical coding was born.

Jim noted that careful documentation of services rendered allowed PAs to bill insurance companies more accurately. Jim didn't set out to be a medical coding expert. He just kind of fell into the niche, found he liked it, and saw there was really a need for coding advice. Prior to that time he hadn't given coding all that much thought, but found the subject increasingly interesting. Coding, he realized, determines how much revenue a PA can bring into a practice, and it was something few people knew much about.

Shortly thereafter, he moved to a clinic in the Roosevelt/Duchesne area, and, as the only provider in town, didn't have much help when it came to coding. He began educating himself through reading and attending seminars. When he realized how important it was, he decided to learn as much as he could. A few years later, Jim was teaching coding to PA students at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. He started giving seminars in 1998 and created Medical Professional Education

and Consulting Services in 2000. Until he became ill he gave workshops across the country. He has spoken to PAs at the annual Association of Family Practice Physician Assistants conference and other PA and NP events. He created and marketed his self-developed Pocket Coder, which took six years to perfect. Did he enjoy his teaching? Here is what he wrote:

"It's a lot of fun when I see the lights come on and people in the classroom understand." He later added:

"Probably the best comment I've received was from somebody who attended a conference and said, 'I've been using the pocket coder for a year and my profitability has increased by 30%.' That made me happy."

Jim took to medicine like a seasoned expert. He began in Family Medicine and expanded his knowledge and skills to include emergency medicine and most recently, urology. As a urology PA, Jim instilled confidence in his patients and supervising physician. In that setting Jim's responsibilities expanded, evidence of the trust and esteem earned from his physician.

A recent posting to his Guest Book summed up the type of service Jim rendered as a clinician:

"Our hearts are heavy today as we learn of Jim's passing. He was our "doctor" during our 4 years in Utah. We are grateful for the compassionate and skilled care we received from him, and will always remember his sweet spirit and true concern for our health and well-being. Our prayers go out to the Meeks family...may you find comfort and peace in our Father's eternal plan of happiness."

Last year, Dr. Patrick C. Cartwright, Professor of Surgery Division Chief of Urology at the University of Utah, spoke to me about hiring a PA to work in the Urology Department at the University of Utah. I encouraged Jim to apply for that position. No PA had served there, and recommending a PA for this pioneering opportunity put our profession in a carefully scrutinized position. I recommended Jim with complete confidence. He set an example of

competent, eager service and demonstrated that PAs can and should handle the specialized caseload the position required.

The Utah Academy of Physician Assistants has been blessed by Jim's skills and willingness to serve. Since graduation he was a constant, reliable academy member who served eagerly. He served as Newsletter Editor, Treasurer, Member at Large and most recently served as the Chair of the Reimbursement Committee. When a tough problem arose pertaining to insurance, reimbursement or practice management, Jim was our go-to man. He assisted the academy with a multitude of thorny issues, from PAs owning their own practices to insurance payment cuts to assisting with analyzing malpractice insurance costs and services for Utah PAs. We are quite literally left without a man of his expertise and knowledge in our academy.

Jim was also responsible for leading our organization into a new age. He brought to us a consulting contact who created the additional funding we needed to hire additional staff and move us from a small, under-funded organization to one with the means to make significant progress for PAs in Utah. He has been repeatedly nominated for UAPA awards and has won both the President's Award and the Lifetime Service Award.

Jim also expanded his reach beyond Utah. He served as Reimbursement Committee Chair, Conference Chair, Chief Delegate, and President for the Association of Family Practice Physician Assistants - a position he was in at the time of his passing. He also worked as a columnist and served on the Advance for Physician Assistants editorial advisory board, one of the most widely read journals for PAs.

Jim took every opportunity to share his knowledge by speaking at national meetings on topics not associated with his coding expertise, including emergency medicine and urology. And even in the extreme straights of his battle against cancer, he continued to give. As recently as March of this year, when I called with a challenging reimbursement issue he responded without hesitation. Even sick from treatments and in pain, he was still happy to give direction and help.

Finally, Jim is the quintessential example of what a PA should be. He was a talented clinician and an inspiring leader, teacher, friend, husband, and father. He had the heart of a servant. The stature of our profession is elevated because of Jim. He inspired me to be a better PA, husband and father. He taught me about tackling tough issues and being of service. I will treasure the memories I have of this wonderful, warm, happy, inquisitive and loving man.

Marcus Tullius Cicero once said: "No man was ever great without divine inspiration." Joseph B. Wirthlin defines greatness as: "Now, for us, the measure of our love is the measure of the greatness of our souls."

And Jim was a great man.

Patty, children, we love you and honor you today and pray you will be comforted and sustained by your memories of this remarkable man.

President's Message

Alan Bybee (*Western Michigan '84*)

Lao Tzu is in some circles recognized as "the father of Taoism." Legend is that he was a great Chinese philosopher and lived sometime between 300 and 600 BC. I recently ran across one of his quotes. "Go to the people, learn from them, live with them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. The best of leaders when the job is done, when the task is accomplished, the people will say we have done it ourselves." *What a remarkable statement!* The Utah Academy of Physician Assistants—*what a remarkable organization!*

As I begin my term as President of your state academy, I have great pride that I can turn to those with whom I work and teach to help build a stronger academy. We have a leadership core that has done tremendous things over the years and continues to do great things. What comes to my mind are the many committee members who use their personal experience to help the academy in many ways. I think of the valuable resource in reimbursement knowledge, that we have lost with the passing of Jim Meeks and the dedicated physician assistants who provide us with

their knowledge at the Mesquite and Snowbird conferences. Each of you can identify with a fellow PA that has great skills or knowledge. Wouldn't it be great if they could share that resource with all of us?

I recently had lunch with Bob Bunnell, Jared Spackman, and UMA assistant executive vice president Michelle McOmber. At the meeting, Jared presented Michelle with the UAPA Presidents' Award, a much-deserved recognition of her work, alongside your fellow physician assistants, to pass valuable legislation on our behalf. Michelle will soon be succeeding Val Bateman who is retiring as the executive director of the Utah Medical Association. I look forward to continuing an enduring relationship with the UMA that Jared, Dave, and Bob have anchored during this last legislative session.

As I mentioned in the last Newsletter, next year I would like to make the academy as "green" as possible. This year we had our first "green" or electronic elections. Although there were glitches, student representative Cole Johnson informed me that the election process went quite well. However, I was disappointed to hear that we only had 47 UAPA members vote. I still view this as successful because a larger number than usual voted. I am concerned that our leadership is selected by a very small number of UAPA members. I hope that next year the BOD will be able to interest more candidates in running and more members to vote. I applaud the leaders who have stepped forward for their desire to serve and the sacrifices they make to do so.

If we can use the resources available to us such as Twitter, blogs, or Facebook effectively, we can bring critical issues to the academy immediately and use the knowledge of members from all over the state. By using "our" resources and "our" knowledge, we will be able to build a stronger, healthier academy together. I look forward to the coming year serving our profession and working together for the continued growth of the Utah Academy of Physician Assistants.

Interesting Fact:

There are 769 PAs with active licenses in Utah; 296 are members of the UAPA.

Executive Director's Message

Bob Bunnell (*Utah '89*)

Life at UAPA is different now, thanks to the addition of Joy Jensen, our new Academy Coordinator. She is working tirelessly to update and organize the membership database. Working with volunteers Tiffany Seamons, Chair of the Membership Committee, Kyle Harmer, Web Chair, and student representative, Cole Johnson, Joy has organized the academy records and is sending timely notices about membership expiration dates and gentle reminders to join. Among many other tasks, she is assisting with the maintenance of the Academy budget, preparing for board meetings, and providing additional support at the Snowbird and Mesquite CME events.

Progress was made on the legislative front during a recent meeting with Michelle McOmber, the newly appointed executive vice president of the UMA. Jared's article informs about this positive meeting. This year Dave Keahey has organized changes to the PA Act and PA Act Rules that will clear up hazy language about NCCPA examination dates and the accrediting body for PA education programs. Additional changes are planned that seek to add additional PAs to the DOPL licensing board, increase the number of PAs a physician may supervise, and clarify supervision requirements for those training PA students.

This is also a banner year for elections. Cole Johnson arranged for electronic balloting this year. The change was flawless! We had more voters than in the past and the results were available very quickly. Expect news about your new officers in this newsletter.

Finally, the Utah Medical Education Council has completed their 2008 survey. You will read about this important research on work trends for Utah PAs in the near future. Jennie Coombs will take the lead on writing the report. Other PAs involved in the research include Don Pedersen, Margaret Baldwin, Eric Heaton, Robert Lucas, and Brett Hilton. Thanks to all the volunteers who willingly assist with advancing opportunities for PAs in Utah.

Past President's Message

Jared Spackman (*Rocky Mountain '00*)

It has been a distinct pleasure to serve the academy for the last year. I feel we have accomplished much of what we set out to do in the past twelve months. We passed important legislation, put on another year of highly successful CME, financially improved the academy's situation and continued to build our core leadership. The best part of the job, however, has been my opportunity to see so many wonderful PAs within the academy give their time and talents for the benefit of all Utah PAs. I have made new acquaintances and friendships that will last for many years.

Our work is not done. Alan Bybee will do a wonderful job in the next year. We recently met with Michelle McComber who is the Utah Medical Association's legislative representative. We have a wonderful relationship with her and UMA. We were very pleased to find out that she is to be shortly promoted to the position of Executive Vice President of the UMA. This is great news for her and also for us in terms of strengthening our already good relationship with the UMA. We had the opportunity to lay out plans to improve PA practice in Utah, including items that will likely wend their way through the next legislative session. At least one of these items will directly impact all practicing Utah PAs in a very positive way, stay tuned for more on this. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

2009 UAPA Elections

Tom Bean (*AZ School of HS, '03*)

Elections are now final. The electronic balloting was a huge success as voting participation was significantly up from the last election. Congratulations to our new UAPA board members:

- President Elect: Shari Combe
- Vice President: Bryan Hofheins
- Treasurer: Brad Pace
- Members at Large:
Jason Carlson and Tamara Meyers
- Senior Delegate: Dave Anderson
- Junior Delegate: Robin Dale

With the exception of the Treasurer's contest (where Brad ran unopposed), all

racers were very close and candidates received more votes than in recent elections. Thanks to all who participated in the elections.

Linn Wheeling New AAPA Western Region Director

Kathy Pedersen (*Utah, '81*)

Linn Wheeling CAE, AAPA Director Western Region AAPA attended the April 2009 UAPA BOD meeting held during the Mesquite conference. Linn was hired by AAPA in February 2009 as an AAPA regional director, to bolster constituent chapters with an improved framework under the leadership of Bill Leinweber, Executive Director of the AAPA. Linn is involved with 11 western states: Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, and Hawaii.

Linn, who has vast experience with the workings of organizations, discussed the overall parameters for gauging the health of an organization. AAPA has developed a constituent organization assessment survey to establish baseline statistics and measures in the following areas:

1. Organizational structure, including administrative processes and operational infrastructures;
2. Leadership and volunteer development processes and practices;
3. Membership communication, marketing and retention processes and practices;
4. Finances and financial management practices;
5. Advocacy practices and ongoing activities;
6. Programs and event management and practices.

UAPA leadership will receive a complete report of the survey findings, including information for capitalizing on identified UAPA strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Linn was a valuable addition to the UAPA BOD meeting and UAPA welcomes her assistance and input.

Mesquite 2009

Dave Anderson (*Utah '85*)

UAPA hosted its 21st annual Mesquite CME this past April. With a full schedule of 25 CME hours plus two optional workshops, we enjoyed the most successful CME to date. Overwhelmingly positive reviews were received from the largest group of attendees in Mesquite CME history. Many attendees stated they hope to never miss this meeting in the future. As always, the annual golf tournament was a great time for all. The Kids' Corner was included two years ago and it continues to grow in popularity. For 2 hours each day, registrants can bring their children to the Kids' Corner for supervised activities freeing partners for "me" time.

The Friday evening poolside buffet and awards ceremony was a highlight of the entire meeting. We honored several of our fellow PAs with awards such as the President's Award, Rural PA of the Year Award, Humanitarian Award, and the Leadership Award. The evening concluded with the fabulous "Healthy Humorist", Dr. Brad Nieder. Dr. Nieder kept us all "in stitches" as he spoke on "laughter is the best medicine." In addition to laughter, Dr. Nieder confessed that "Lortab is pretty great as well", having taken some following a recent sports injury to his shoulder.



*The "Healthy Humorist"
Dr. Brad Nieder entertains PAs attending the
Mesquite conference.*

The Mesquite CME committee and the UAPA board of directors paid tribute to John Allen, the founder of the Mesquite CME meeting. A wall plaque was presented to his family and it was announced that this meeting will be known as the "John Allen Memorial Mesquite CME." A copy of the plaque was presented to the University of Utah PA Program where it will be displayed so we can all

see, enjoy, and remember the work and contributions of this wonderful man. Plans for Mesquite 2010 are already in the works and will be held April 21-24, 2009. Please plan to attend and we will deliver the best meeting possible.

Snowbird 2009

Mario Capecchi to Give Keynote Address

Scott Gardner (*Emory '96*)

Don't forget to register for the 33rd Annual Snowbird CME Conference August 12-14. The keynote speaker will be Mario Capecchi, Ph.D., 2007 Nobel Prize Laureate in Physiology and Medicine and University of Utah Professor in Genetics.



Registration information can be found at this website: fhea.com/snowbird.shtml. We have a great program this year with 20 hours of CME, great food, the cool, beautiful mountains! We look forward to seeing you there!

Utah PA Spotlight: Hernan Garreaud, PA-C

Kathy Pedersen (*Utah '81*)

Hernan Garreaud was an US Army medic and x-ray tech when he learned about PAs from Utah graduates who were Army reservists. Though Hernan came from a metropolis of 3.5 million in Santiago, Chile, the definition of a PA as a "healthcare provider for the rural and underserved" resonated with him. He has lived up to that first impression of PAs in his own professional life.

Becoming a PA meant helping rural communities and working as a team player in the practice of medicine. Hernan finds it a challenge on a daily basis to work as a PA. Every day is different, every patient is different; even the *same* patient can be different on a different day. He states that it

is a constant challenge to be a PA no matter where you practice.

Hernan faced other challenges in his life. He emigrated from Chile to the US with his parents because of a CIA-backed military coup. His brother who already lived in USA sponsored them. Hernan was to see the other side of immigration—the undocumented variety—in his work as one of the first national "Migrant Health Fellows," a 7-month program pioneered by Don Pedersen PA-C, PhD, and funded by the National Rural Health Association. Hernan went to Brownsville, Texas with the task to learn "how people crossed borders and where they go." He saw firsthand "No Man's Land," where he found no resources, no health care, and people living in boxes. Hernan admired the tenacity and great courage of the people who crossed the border wanting to better their lives and their future. He was fortunate to cross the border legally earlier in his life, but sees parallels and understands the risks illegal immigration presents to those who don't.

One immigrant story sticks with him. A family from Guatemala came to the border – a husband, wife, and 2 small children. They crossed, but did not have enough money to pay the "coyote" who kept the husband in Mexico until money could be raised. Hernan, now assigned to Brigham City, Utah, found the wife and children working in Utah onion fields. The mom worked with one child on her back; her 5 year-old child helped pick onions. Eventually, the wife and children made enough money for the father to cross. This family's story impressed Hernan because despite the odds and challenges, the family managed to stay together. Hernan's clinics in Utah were "in the fields" since patients had no time to come to visits. There were 2 field clinics--Brigham City and Midvale, UT. Hernan admired that the immigrants were satisfied with whatever they had or whatever could be done, though it might be very little. He would soon learn of greater poverty with less hope in Egypt.

Hernan speaks English, Spanish, some Russian, and some Arabic. He used Spanish in his work in rural Utah and of course, in his migrant work. He was awarded the Utah Rural PA of the Year in the 1990s. And how did he come to speak Russian and Arabic? Well, he wanted some

adventure. The Seavan Company, who based their decision on his Utah Rural PA of the Year award, recruited him to Egypt. Hernan lived in an American compound, caring for employees as a solo practitioner with a long distance supervising physician in America. His spouse, who was a nurse, was eager to go and accompanied him. He worked 9 days on and 9 days off. On his days off, he traveled in Egypt from border to border, providing care and preventive medicine.

"I can't believe the life and experiences that my education has given me. The advantages America offers still amazes me and I've experienced it first hand. God Bless America!"

He later moved to Saudi Arabia with McDonnell Douglas. His spouse needed to wear an "abaya" or "burka-like" covering. She actually liked it since she didn't need to worry about her hair or dress and attracted less attention. Hernan was in charge of one of the compounds with an MD on site. He traveled throughout Saudi Arabia, though unable to give the type of charitable care he did in Egypt. Instead, he did charitable care in the Masa Mara in Kenya, seeing patients during his visits to the area.



Hernan Gaining New Global Skills

Hernan's next stop was Turkmenistan; he worked as a senior medical officer in the US Embassy/Peace Corps. He felt this assignment was different from the other overseas positions in that it was very "political" with distinct limitations. He wasn't permitted to treat the locals. He had to maintain a stiff, professional relationship

with his patients. Though Hernan was friendly with certain diplomats with whom he shared common interests, he generally had to keep a formal distance and could never discuss local politics.

Hernan then found himself in Dutch Harbor, AK, as Medical Director serving the isolated fishing community shown on the television show "The Deadliest Catch." His work in Alaska included two weeks straight of 24 hour on-call, including the area of Prudhoe Bay. After sworworking in Alaska, Hernan returned to rural Utah. He works in the clinic and ER in Kanab during the week and in the Duck Creek Village on weekends. The Clinic in Duck Creek Village is a satellite clinic of Kane County Hospital that opened in March 2008. It is open on weekends serving a small, but growing full time community with a large, recreational population of 25,000 during peak seasons. Hernan has served the PAs of Utah as the UAPA Member-at-Large this past year.

Hernan embodies one of the precepts upon which PAs were created. He believes PAs are ideally suited for work in rural areas; they fill a void that many physicians don't find attractive. Hernan has worked in rural or remote areas that demand the skills and experience to handle the common cold or well-child exam, initial life-threatening conditions and trauma, and the exotic illnesses seldom encountered in the US. He's taken short assignments in urban practices, but returns to where he believes he can make the greatest contribution to others. Hernan feels that access to good health care is important for everyone and that PAs deliver quality health care cost effectively.

Utah Physician Assistant Program Granted Maximum Accreditation

Don Pedersen (*Utah '79*)

At its recent accreditation review, the University of Utah Physician Assistant Program (UPAP) was granted seven years of continuing accreditation. This length of time is the maximum granted to physician assistant programs across the country by the Accreditation Review Commission for Education of Physician Assistants (ARCPA). This is the third time in a row that

UPAP has been granted the maximum allowable time for continuing accreditation.

The results of the review process relates to how well a PA program adheres to a set of accreditation standards. These standards have been in place since the 1970s for the now 145 accredited PA programs in the United States. UPAP was established in 1971 as the Utah MEDEX Demonstration Project in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine (DFPM) by Drs. C. Hilmon Castle and William Wilson. The PA Program has enjoyed great success over the years. What began as a "demonstration project" nearly 40 years ago is presently a 27 month, 7 semester graduate program in the School of Medicine granting a Master's of Physician Assistant Studies degree. With over 800 applicants per year for 40 seats, UPAP is highly sought after by applicants and is consistently ranked among the most effective PA Programs in the nation by US News & World Report (www.usnews.com).

Correction

The author of "Utah Guidelines for Prescribing Pain Meds" was misidentified in the April 2009 UAPA Newsletter Vol. 2 Number 2. The correct authors of the piece were:

- Erin Johnson, MPH, Prescription Pain Medication Program Manager, and
- Tom Hudachko, Public Information Officer, Utah Department of Health.

The UAPA editorial staff regrets the error.

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UAPA BOD 2009-2010

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Robin Dale (*King's College '97*)

Contact Dave Keahey to submit articles for the Newsletter: dkeahey@upap.utah.edu



Membership Application

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Please select one membership option from the choices below:

Fellow

- 2 Year (PA) \$170/2 Years
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- Nurse Practitioner \$45/One Year
- Other professionals \$60/One Year

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I am interested helping UAPA in the following personal area of expertise:
