INTRODUCED BY: Baltimore County Medical Association

SUBJECT: Law Enforcement Use of Lethal Force in Cases of Patients with Mental Illness

Whereas, although most individuals with mental illness do not threaten or perpetrate violence against others or against law enforcement officers; and

Whereas, there is a small minority who are threatening to others, particularly if they are having a relapse in their illness or are not responding to treatment for some reason; and

Whereas, in these circumstances the mentally ill person may feel the need to defend themselves against a delusional misperception of what is happening to them and take up a weapon of some kind; and

Whereas, if this weapon is a firearm, they represent a clear and present danger to law enforcement and the law enforcement officer must use whatever force is necessary to defend him/herself including shooting to kill the mentally ill individual; and

Whereas, sometimes the mentally ill person will seize a knife or a club of some kind and shooting the individual to disable the person may allow the officer to get control of the situation without killing the person; and

Whereas, in England there was a case in which two mentally ill individuals with hatchets and knives attacked and hacked to death a British soldier, and police were called to the scene, and the police were threatened, and they shot these individuals in the leg and subdued them; therefore be it

Resolved, that MedChi advocate for better law enforcement training in shooting to disable as well as shooting to kill, so that mentally ill persons who are not armed with a firearm may survive such encounters more often.

Resolution 2-14 was referred to the MedChi Board of Trustees by the House of Delegates at its meeting on April 26, 2014.