

2021 House of Delegates

Report of the Incoming President

Greetings from your incoming president to the NJAFP. I am truly humbled to stand before you as I begin my year of service as your president. As most of you know, this is a belated announcement – it had been scheduled to occur last spring and was one of the many casualties of our current COVID-19 epidemic.

As co-owner of a small to medium sized family practice office in Brick I acutely understand the challenges of the private practice physician in our current medical and clinical environment. However, I started my career as an employed physician in a family practice residency and I also understand the benefits of working within a larger health care system, as well the value of student and resident education. I intend to bring all of my experiences to bear in guiding the academy over the next twelve months.

The impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on primary care practice would be hard to overstate. The cost in patient lives has been horrific, and the disruption to revenue, staffing, and supplies has left many family practices and their patients in a perilous position. However, opportunities have arisen from the crisis. Family Doctors in New Jersey have greatly expanded access to telehealth services for our patients. The NJAFP has also been in active communication with the NJ department of health commissioner Judith Persichilli concerning ways to mitigate the crisis through expanded vaccination strategies. My goal over the next year is to build on the progress we have made fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and to build on our current successes and relationships while developing new strategies to assist family doctors and their patients navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 landscape.

Student and resident education have always been dear to my heart. There is nothing like an apt pupil amazed by your knowledge and skill to brighten up your day. Family Practice residencies have always faced a challenge in trying to recruit medical students away from the lure of sub-specialties. Now we also face the challenge of nurse practitioner and physicians' assistants' programs poaching our college students before they even get to medical school. I am hoping to work closely with our president elect Kelly Ussery and other program directors to present family medicine as an attractive career to medical and college students.

Another of my interests – actually a “pet peeve” is the administrative burden in clinical practice. The amount of time we spend with preauthorization's, medicine substitutions, clinical suggestions, and denials of service greatly subtracts from the time and energy we have to help our patients with their actual medical needs. I am currently suffering from carpal tunnel syndrome that I am sure was caused by too many mouse clicks on an insurance form. A goal of my next 12 months is to work with the AAFP to reduce the administrative burden on the practicing family physician.

I love Family Medicine. I love almost everything about it. I love the intimacy of longtime patients. I get excited by the newness of a “new patient” visit. I revel in being an integral part of my local community. I can't wait to get to the office each day to spend time with co-workers. I love passing my 30+ years of clinical experience to the residents and students I teach. And I intend to bring all of this passion to my job as NJAFP president.

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In conclusion I would like to thank Ray and the entire administrative staff of the NJAFP for their guidance and assistance. I also need to thank the entire board and past presidents for their guidance over the years. I especially need to thank Joe Schauer for introducing me to the NJAFP and giving me some gentle prodding over the years to get a little bit more involved. I hope to do you all proud.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Cascarina, MD
Incoming President