

Strengthening Our Workforce

■ ROBERT T. GORMAN, MD

When we graduated from medical school, we knew that we were starting a career in which attention to lifelong learning was mandatory in order to be effective physicians throughout our practice years. I remember being told that half of what we learned in medical school would not be valid five years later. I really hoped they would tell us which half, because there was so much to learn. Nevertheless, I eventually felt prepared by residency and I had a plan for keeping up to date. This involved reading numerous journals, attending live CME events locally, and engaging in frequent discussions with colleagues in Family Medicine and various consultants. The annual meeting of the NJAFP provided me with an opportunity to obtain CME and to also network with colleagues and friends from around the state. What I did not realize then was that at least as much effort was needed to stay abreast of how we would practice medicine in the ever-changing world of regulations and outside mandates imposed upon us by federal and state agencies, as well as the insurance industry.

During my year as president of the NJAFP, I have had the privilege to represent you at a variety of national meetings and to visit other state chapters. Each time I did this, I came away greatly impressed by the caliber of talent and the strength of commitment possessed by the leaders I have met.

I have written several times about the work our national leaders have been doing to help shape the evolution of the implementation of MACRA into legislation. MACRA will strengthen the primary care workforce by reducing many of the administrative burdens we have endured under programs such as Meaningful Use, and will compensate us fairly for the patient care that we deliver during face-to-face visits and coordinating care in between visits. Some of our senior leadership at the AAFP believes that the changes that occur with MACRA will have a greater impact

on Family Medicine than anything else in the last 40 years.

It seems to me that we all have several choices of practice delivery going forward. More of us are opting for new practice styles like Direct Primary Care (DPC) or concierge style practices. Some of us are resisting change and trying to hold on as long as possible to the “way we always did it.” Many of us are trying to find new ways to adapt to the changes that come with MACRA and to find opportunities to care for our patients on a larger scale with team-based approaches in collaboration with other physicians, NPs, PAs and medical assistants. We are trying to provide resources through the NJAFP for whatever path you chose.

At the Family Medicine Congressional Conference in April, Past President Dr. Tom Shafrey, and Executive VP of the NJAFP, Ray Sapeutelli, joined me in meeting with members of Congress and their staffs. Washington, DC is a fascinating place to visit. The experience was very educational and at times entertaining. Our NJ elected representatives told us that the AAFP does a great job of keeping them informed on national issues, so we used much of our time to advocate for issues within NJ and to establish relationships for future dialogue. We all felt that it was time well spent.

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The Annual Chapter Leader Forum in Kansas City was my last trip as president this year. In addition to the usual discussions of important national topics, we also used this opportunity to network again with the American Board of Family Medicine. At the start of my term, I stated that one of my goals was to work on the “quadruple aim” which, as its fourth component, has a goal of improving the work-life of the healthcare work force (us!).

The advocacy work that I have been writing about is part of the equation, but helping family physicians identify burnout and give them tools to effectively deal with it is the final goal. We have engendered enthusiasm within the ABFM and the AAFP to collaborate to produce a tool that would be educational and helpful in both a preventive and remedial way, as well as satisfying requirements for maintenance of certification.

As I wind down my year as president and prepare to pass the baton to Dr. Aditya Bhattacharyya, your incoming president, I do so with a sense of pride and satisfaction. I will continue to work with a wonderful group of leaders as Chairman of the NJAFP Board of Trustees. Our Academy is strong and well respected around the country. I mentioned in my last article the energy and enthusiasm that you derive from interacting with and teaching medical students. I can assure you that the same thing happens when you work with enthusiastic physician colleagues and staff like those we have at the NJAFP. I want to thank you very much for giving me the privilege of serving as your president. It was a very exciting and rewarding year. ▲



Robert T. Gorman, MD is President of the New Jersey Academy of Family Physicians and a practicing family physician in Verona, NJ.