

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



The Pillars of ACOFP: A Retrospective on the Presidency

Nicole Heath Bixler, DO, MBA, FACOFP

ACOFP President

In my final letter as your ACOFP president, it is my opportunity to share what I believe have been our greatest achievements since March 2020—a pivotal point for the obvious reason that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected every single decision, program, committee, student, resident and physician of our organization. The very week that my family and I were planning to travel to New Orleans for my presidential installation, the ACOFP Board of Governors was faced with the decision to convert our traditional convention to a virtual-only event. That was just one of many successful “firsts” and set the precedent for many more difficult decisions to come.

In the following six months, our country saw the devastation of our healthcare system not being prepared for the magnitude of a pandemic, the effects of isolation on our families and patients, the downfalls of virtual learning on our children and the ongoing social inequities that plague our society—all matters that shaped our organization's priorities and initiatives, as I assumed the role of president in a virtual installation in October 2020.

The Task Force on Racism and Health—later renamed the Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)—was formulated to address the needs of ACOFP in the areas of community outreach, education and governance. The resounding effort of 33 individual ACOFP members has culminated in a 15-point plan that has been approved by the board and is being enacted through DEI resolutions, changes in gathering member demographics, the continuation of blog posts, culturally sensitive continuing medical education (CME) and the development of diverse committees to lead this work.

In tandem with these efforts, a Task Force on Governance was appointed to thoroughly evaluate our governance structure to assure it represents the members and patients we serve, while remaining nimble and responsive to changes in our environment. The extensive work of this group and your Board of Governors has already moved our organization forward and resulted in proposed changes to our Bylaws and Constitution that look to ensure adequate representation for the future of our organization. I am extremely proud of what has already been achieved and the accomplishments still to come.

As we navigated our Zoom calls, telehealth visits and new roles of home-school teachers and preceptors, ACOFP continued to innovate and adapt to bring you meaningful CME through our virtual conventions, Intensive Osteopathic Update, webinars and eLearning offerings. These efforts have been made possible by the creativity and dedication of a phenomenal staff and the willingness of speakers and educators to work outside of their comfort zone.

We have embarked on new educational pathways by collaborating with the Endocrine Society to offer a certificate program exploring diabetes care and management, with the Hepatitis B Foundation to provide complimentary CME on hepatitis B recognition and determination, and with Med-IQ to develop an HIV testing and treatment curriculum. Our re-envisioned OMTotal video library—the largest of its kind—is a testament to our commitment to osteopathic principles, highlighting over 150 OMT techniques through video and audio explanation. It is apparent that we will never return to a world without the availability of virtual CME and meetings and hope to balance that convenience with the need for human interaction and collegiality.

As I reflect on this culmination of work during my presidency, it truly is in alignment with the pillars of our ACOFP mission: visionary leadership, quality education and responsible advocacy.

Despite the lack of in-person connectivity over the past two years, the sheer nature of these circumstances has highlighted our need of belonging to ACOFP. In our November membership survey, more than 1,100 practicing physicians responded that the number-one reason for being a member was because they knew ACOFP was advocating for them and osteopathic family medicine. We have submitted more than 20 comment letters to federal legislators focused on personal protective equipment, maternal health, nutrition for children, preservation of the family medicine care model, the family physician shortage and the perpetual threat of Medicare cuts. We continue to partner with the ACOFP Education & Research Foundation and the American Osteopathic Board of Family Physicians in promoting osteopathic board certification to our graduating residents through Early Entry Initial Certification and the Initial Certification Grant program.

Our collaboration with other family medicine organizations—such as the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Board of Family Medicine and Society of Teachers of Family Medicine—has allowed us to participate in the proposed revisions to the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education's program

requirements for graduate medical education in family medicine, and we are appreciative to have the osteopathic voice heard.

As I reflect on this culmination of work during my presidency, it truly is in alignment with the pillars of our ACOFP mission: visionary leadership, quality education and responsible advocacy. This work is not accomplished by one person or one president, but rather through the collective passion, diligence and perseverance of the entire board and staff. It requires listening to our membership and challenging ourselves to be inclusive and equitable in all that we do, as the future is no place to place our better days. These have been the best of my days, and I am truly grateful for having had the opportunity to serve in this capacity. To serve our profession as one of only four female presidents in the history of ACOFP, while balancing my roles as leader, physician, wife and mother during a time of uncertainty and unrest, I leave this position hoping I have made a positive impact on the future of osteopathic family medicine. I truly believe the best is yet to come.

Thank you for all that you DO.



Nicole Heath Bixler, DO, MBA, FACOFP

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH 30 - APRIL 2, 2022

AOMA 100th Annual Convention
Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association
Scottsdale, Arizona
azosteo.org

APRIL 28-30, 2022

Ohio Osteopathic Symposium
Ohio State Society of the ACOFP
Columbus, OH & Virtual
ohioacofp.org

APRIL 28 - MAY 1, 2022

122nd Annual Convention
Oklahoma Osteopathic Association
Oklahoma City, OK
okosteo.org

JUNE 17-19, 2022

TOMA/TxACOFP 15th Annual Convention
Texas State Chapter of the ACOFP
Arlington, TX
txacofp.org

JULY 15-17, 2022

Direct Primary Care Summit
ACOFP
Kansas City, MO
dpcsummit.org

JULY 27-31, 2022

46th Annual CME Seminar & Convention
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians of California
Anaheim, CA
acofpca.org

JULY 28-31, 2022

FSACOFP Annual Convention
Florida Society of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
Orlando, FL
fsacofp.org

AUGUST 5-7, 2022

ACOFP Intensive Osteopathic Update
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians
Rosemont, IL
acofp.org

CME Resource: *Osteopathic Family Physician* Offers 2 Hours of 1-B CME

ACOFP members who read *Osteopathic Family Physician* can receive two hours of Category 1-B continuing medical education credit for completing quizzes in the journal. Visit the eLearning center at www.acofp.org to access the quizzes.