

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Our Commitment to Serve

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At my workplace, we talk a lot about our hometown heroes—the physicians, nurses, and other medical professionals who go above and beyond every day. How do we find joy in the ever-changing medical environment as we see new diseases, illnesses, environmental health concerns, and issues that affect our communities? The chance of danger on all fronts seems ever increasing. I recently attended a medical humanities lecture that included a powerful discussion on the issues we confront beyond our day-to-day challenges. Called “Diastole Hour,” the lecture was presented by Dr. Barry Meisenberg, chair of medicine and chief academic officer at Luminis Health.¹

The new diseases and mounting pressures from disasters have fundamentally changed how we have come to practice medicine over the past few years. There is no safety from catching an illness, yet we continue to open our offices and hearts to our patients, risking illness ourselves. We are still examining our patients closely, bending forward to listen to their breathing. We do so to make sure we are not missing a diagnosis and because we want to connect with our patients. We are in this world together, and our commitment to serve is strong.

To all the family physicians of the world: your efforts are appreciated. You are the backbone of health care for your patients. You are the primary communicator, translating health goals, updates on illnesses, and instructions. You know and understand your patients, that they are there to see you, often taking time away from *the work that must be done for America*—the farming tasks or the businesses that absolutely would not run without them—because you also show up every day.

These issues are not taken lightly. The chances of that patient taking more time off—or even being able to take time off—to visit a specialist is less likely these days. Superimposed on these issues are the overwhelming needs of patients who are underserved. This is your day, and you are up for the challenge.

Every single day, you leave your problems at the door and come ready to help those who need you most. You have weathered diseases like COVID-19, hepatitis C, and HIV by learning all you could in a short amount of time. You have seen how fires and floods have affected your patients, or others, and are ready to assist in needed areas.

It is great to see the new osteopathic medical school expansions and the support our communities give to the progress. Our profession holds so much promise to improve health. Many of you have become involved in teaching clinically and days are filled with hope. The future student physicians are strong.

As we look at the need to graduate more physicians and as institutions open in areas that most need them, we applaud that growth. Osteopathic colleges teach beyond the basics of our profession; they teach the students what it's like to manage expectations in this ever-changing environment. The new colleges are adding much-needed information on connecting with patients and supporting them in environments that may or may not have other specialist support. As family physicians, we not only need to know how to communicate and diagnose, but we also must be able to advise our patients on diet, nutrition, and wellness as we seek to create a better picture of overall health.

Each one of our physicians is important every single day. You are heroes. I trust that the articles in this issue will speak to your busy schedule and needs.

1. “Diastole Hour” is a program for students, trainees, medical staff, and patients who use literary and visual arts to explore experiences unique to the practice of medicine. Physicians, patients, and others share their voices in a format that encourages group discussion. The goal of the program is to reflect on those experiences that are most meaningful to the practice of medicine. – Dr. Barry Meisenberg (bmeisenber@luminishealth.org).