

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



### Fellowship and Family: Engendering Lifelong Connections

Bruce R. Williams, DO, FACOFP

Being a member means being part of something. It means belonging. It means identifying with people who have similar ideas, concerns, passions, and desires, and even though you may use a different approach to achieve the same result, you are willing to work collaboratively with others who see the issue differently.

So is this politics? Well, politics suggests governance and power. While governance is inherent in membership to achieve organization (as opposed to power), membership is an identity—a statement—of what and who you are. I bring this up because membership organizations are experiencing a decline, and there has been significant speculation and investigation as to why. Many reasons are cited: cost, value, time commitment, recognition, association, and just plain apathy. All are valid, but I would like to explain some reasons why membership should be sought after—especially within ACOFP.

In our Osteopathic Oath, there are several statements. “I do hereby affirm my loyalty to the profession I am about to enter.” “I will be mindful always of my great responsibility to preserve the health and life of my patients.” “I will be ever vigilant in aiding in the general welfare of the community, sustaining its laws and institutions, not engaging in those practices which will in any way bring shame or discredit upon myself or my profession.”

For me, this means I will be an advocate for my patients and my colleagues. Organized medicine is how we do this. We give our voice volume through membership organizations. When we can go to a legislator, a corporation, or a public forum and say we represent 20,000 osteopathic family physicians, residents, and students, that is meaningful and impactful. As issues are brought to ACOFP, they are studied, discussed, and debated, and a position is arrived at. We speak with one voice on behalf of our physicians and especially our patients. I have always believed that membership in my local, state, national, and specialty organizations is not only an option but also an obligation to honor and be true to the oath I took when I became an osteopathic physician.

My belonging to osteopathic membership organizations like ACOFP has helped me to grow and develop as a physician and as a person. Organized medicine has been the primary route through which I receive my continuing medical education—the path by which I renew, refresh, and update my osteopathic medical knowledge and skills. We have experts in the medical field across our profession who are committed to helping us achieve lifelong learning so that we can maintain and improve the levels of care we give our patients.

Furthermore, not everyone pursues a leadership path, but when I did, I was blessed to be mentored by the finest leaders in the profession—and I have grown in my ability to listen, consider differing points of view, be humble, and open the door for others to grow, develop, and succeed. Perhaps the most significant attribute of membership is fellowship. When I reached out to William Betz, DO, in 1988 for an application to join the Jackson County Osteopathic Association, I never dreamed it would lead me to where I am today. I was welcomed and embraced, and I was continually introduced to colleagues who had a genuine interest in me and what I had to say. Over nearly 35 years, this network has grown across the country, and my colleagues are also some of my closest friends.

Our medical conferences are reunions. It is more about seeing and catching up with friends and—yes—family, than it is about the CME. Sure, there are the lectures, the meetings, the discussions, and the occasional debate. But it is mostly about the fellowship. I am sure this is the case outside the osteopathic profession, but it is so much more present and potent within our profession. The bond we have with each other is obvious, and that carries over to our relationships with our staff and especially our patients. We are a family.

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When you are supported and held up by so many people who you truly love and appreciate, it is nearly impossible to live within yourself. Yes, I have grown over the years—and I thank my osteopathic family for that. Yes, my education prepared me to be an osteopathic physician, but the membership organizations—especially ACOFP—have been the glue, the bond, that has strengthened me.

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I have been given incredible opportunities as a result of my involvement in organized medicine, and every day—owing to this involvement—new opportunities crop up to help, grow, and lead. I have met and become friends with special and influential people. I have been able to travel to extraordinary places. I have been challenged in ways I never could have predicted. And I have grown in insight, wisdom, and humility.

When you are supported and held up by so many people who you truly love and appreciate, it is nearly impossible to live within yourself. Yes, I have grown over the years—and I thank my osteopathic family for that. Yes, my education prepared me to be an osteopathic physician, but the membership organizations—especially ACOFP—have been the glue, the bond, that has strengthened me.

Cost? Value? I would say membership is priceless. Recognition? I have been given much more than I have sought. Association? My daily interaction is with some of the most respected individuals in not only the osteopathic profession but also the greater medical profession. Apathy? Not in my experience.

If you are an ACOFP member, you know what I am saying. If you are not, I invite you to join. As a member, you will be welcomed. We want to reach out to you to get to know you, discover your passions, and help you pursue them.

Are you looking to start a new practice, move to a different practice, expand your scope, or pursue administrative, academic, or research opportunities? Maybe you want to become more involved in the community—either locally, nationally, or globally. Are you looking for an opportunity to develop as a leader? Or simply to become more involved? Whatever it is you might be looking for, ACOFP can help you—and you will meet some amazing people who will become lifelong friends and family. If you haven't done so already, I invite you to join us this year and for years to come.

Osteopathically yours,



Bruce R. Williams, DO, FACOFP  
2022–23 ACOFP President

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### DECEMBER 2–4, 2022

IOA 41st Annual Winter Update  
Indiana Osteopathic Association  
Indianapolis, IN  
[Inosteo.org](http://Inosteo.org)

### DECEMBER 5, 2022

Illinois ACOFP Membership Reception  
Illinois Society of the ACOFP  
Chicago, IL  
[acofp.org/Illinois](http://acofp.org/Illinois)

### JANUARY 20–21, 2023

IACOFPP Midwinter Osteopathic  
Family Practice Conference  
ACOFPP Iowa Chapter  
Des Moines, IA  
[acofp-ia.org](http://acofp-ia.org)

### JANUARY 26–29, 2023

Winter Family Medicine Update  
Missouri Society of the ACOFP  
Columbia, MO  
[msacofp.org](http://msacofp.org)

### JANUARY 27–29, 2023

2023 Faculty Development  
and Program Directors' Workshop  
American College of Osteopathic  
Family Physicians  
Virtual  
[acofp.org/FDPDW](http://acofp.org/FDPDW)

### MARCH 29–APRIL 2, 2023

ACOFPP 60th Annual Convention  
& Scientific Seminars  
American College of Osteopathic  
Family Physicians  
Orlando, FL & Virtual  
[acofp.org/acofp23](http://acofp.org/acofp23)

### APRIL 20–23, 2023

Ohio Osteopathic Symposium  
Ohio Chapter of the ACOFP  
Columbus, OH  
[ohioacofp.org](http://ohioacofp.org)

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

ACOFPP 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 ACOFP eLearning Center at [www.acofp.org](http://www.acofp.org) to access the quizzes.