



Washington, DC Update – Remembering A Powerful Advocate for Osteopathic Medicine

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From the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians, Arlington Heights, IL.

In this special edition of “Washington, D.C. update” I wish to acknowledge the loss of our strongest voice advocating for osteopathic family medicine and co-author of this column since the advent of our journal, Marcelino Oliva, DO, FACOFP *dist.*

A leading osteopathic family medicine practitioner and lifelong spokesman for the profession. Dr. Oliva died Friday, July 8, 2011 after a year-long battle with multiple myeloma cancer. He was 75 years of age.

In noting Dr. Oliva’s passing, ACOFP President George T. Sawabini, FACOFP *dist.* said, “Dr. Oliva was an inspiration to so many of us. From his early years as an emigrant from Cuba to his many years as a distinguished osteopathic family medicine physician to his decades of service speaking up in the halls of Congress as our most powerful and articulate voice, Dr. Oliva was an outstanding leader for our profession. He was a force to be reckoned with.”



Marcelino Oliva, DO, FACOFP *dist.*

A Lifetime of Service

Dr. Oliva’s “lifetime” story begins in Cuba, from which he emigrated as a young boy prior to the establishment of the Castro regime. He was mentored into the osteopathic pro-

fession by Wardell Stanfield, DO of Dade City, Florida. He established his first family practice in Bay City, Florida in 1965 and continued to care for patients throughout his life in that community.

Dr. Oliva received his B.S. degree in 1959 from Spring Hill College in Mobile Alabama, and his DO degree in 1964 from the University of Health Science, College of Osteopathic Medicine (formerly known as Kansas City College of Osteopathic Medicine). The College named him Alumnus of the Year in 1983. He completed his internship at Oklahoma Osteopathic Hospital in 1965. After he completed his training, Dr. Oliva returned to Dade City where he practiced for more than 35 years.

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New Corresponding Author: Effective with the November-December 2011 issue of *Osteopathic Family Physician*, the corresponding author will be Ray Quintero, Director of Congressional Affairs, American Osteopathic Association, 1090 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20005.

Doctor Oliva had three passions in his life:

1. His family
2. His Cuban heritage
3. His profession of osteopathic family medicine

He doted on his wife, Lora Lee, daughters Lori, Marcie and Teresa as well as a large extended family. He cared for and about his patients. He enjoyed entertaining, telling stories and barbecuing for friends and family.

And, in an already busy life, he lent his considerable knowledge, dedication and voice to the growth and success of osteopathic medicine.

ACOFP Service

A member of ACOFP since 1967, Dr. Oliva served as chair of the Federal Legislation Committee and the Advisory Committee on Federal Legislation. He became a Fellow in 1982, sponsored by the late Dr. Frank McDevitt, and he received his Distinguished Fellow designation in 2009. In 2007, ACOFP presented Dr. Oliva with its highest award – Osteopathic Family Physician of the Year and recognized his distinguished career with the 2010 Lifetime Achievement Award.

He continued to serve ACOFP as its Chair of the Committee on Federal Legislation and co-authored this column until shortly before his death.

National Leadership Role

For the osteopathic profession at large, Dr. Oliva worked to unite the various facets of osteopathic medicine while maintaining its unique status in the health care field. During his tenure as 1988-89 AOA President – the first minority to hold that post – he was determined to bring osteopathic care into pre-eminence in clinical practice, education, research and public health policy. He set four goals for achieving that aim:

- First, he worked to re-establish solidarity and unity among all of the components of organized osteopathic medicine.
- Second, he sought to maintain the viability of osteopathic hospitals.
- Third, he served as a catalyst to expanding the profession into regions of the country which are either underserved or not served at all by DOs.

- Fourth, he advocated for expansion of educational programs.

He made significant progress towards achieving those goals during his Presidential term.

More than two decades after holding that highest office, he continued to advocate for the profession as Chair of the AOA Bureau of Federal Health Programs and chair of the AOA Department of Governmental Affairs, the Bureau of Public Education on Health and the Committee on Health Related Policies.

His political prowess was evident early in his career, when he was instrumental in earning admitting privileges for osteopathic physicians at the hospital in Pasco County – this after the lack of admitting privileges caused him to allow patients to sleep overnight in the clinic behind the building where he lived. Dr. Oliva filed – and won – a federal lawsuit alleging discrimination toward osteopathic physicians by a tax-supported hospital.

Past chief-of-staff of the East Pasco Medical Center in Dade City, Dr. Oliva also served as a member of the Executive Committee of Humana Pasco Hospital. He also served as a medical consultant for the athletic department and student health center of St. Leo (Florida) College and also held an appointment as trustee of the Southeastern College of Osteopathic Medicine in North Miami Beach, Florida.

At the state level and local levels Dr. Oliva contributed countless volunteer hours to the Florida ACOFP Society and the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA), as his expertise on insurance and reimbursement issues was sought by many state advisory boards. He served as president, trustee and officer of the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA) and as chair of FOMA's Political Action Committee. He was also a member and past-president of FOMA District Society 13 and the chair of the Florida Chapter of the AOA House of Delegates. He also served multiple terms as a delegate from Florida to the ACOFP Congress of Delegates. He received FOMA's Distinguished Service Award in 1978.

Beyond all this, Dr. Oliva was instrumental in getting osteopathic medicine the respect it deserves on Capitol Hill through OPAC – the Osteopathic Political Action Committee that today stands as one of the largest medical PACs on the Hill.

Now, we all wish him “God Speed” as he finally rests from his lifelong labors.