

# Perspectives: A View of Family Medicine in New Jersey 3Q2016

## Just Yesterday...

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It is hard to believe that my term as President of this Academy started over a month ago. It seems just yesterday that I was the Board Liaison to the Executive Committee. It was a daunting path in front of me as I had a lot to learn. I have been in teaching all my life and had no experience in running a practice myself. Well running your residency practice counts somewhat, but a lot of management decisions are often out of your control. I've learned a lot in the past five years, though one year my job was limited to announcing that we had a quorum at meetings. I am indeed honored and humbled to have the opportunity to serve you as the new president of the New Jersey Academy of Family Physicians. Coming from a background of education, I hope to bring with me another way of looking at the problems that face family physicians in our state today. Every year for the past 10 to 12 years, I have been going to Kansas City and have heard the great educators of Family Medicine talk about their passion, hard work, and vision for the future of our specialty. What really inspired me about them was their resilience and optimism in the face of so many obstacles, for that is what family physicians do. We take care of our patients first, even under the most trying circumstances.

Talking about obstacles that we face, there are many. We work in a health system where profits are put before care and access to basic health needs is denied to many of our citizens. Our health care spending is astronomical and our health outcomes are poor. Many are talking about these issues but meaningful change is hard to come by when non-physicians are making healthcare laws and the pharmaceutical industry rules the game as they have more money and lobbying power. Change is also hard to come by in the fee-for-service model that exists today, which encourages unnecessary testing and procedures for profit.

But there is hope and there is data to support what we have been saying all along.

1. Having family physicians at the core of health care reduces costs and improves outcomes as many other developed countries have shown.
2. Family physicians, with their emphasis on prevention, are key to keeping populations healthy and out of hospitals, leading to lower overall healthcare costs.
3. Family physicians that run hospitalist services have lower length of stays
4. We take care of patients of all ages, in all situations, and have excellent patient satisfaction scores.

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The list goes on. How can we bring this message to the people of New Jersey? How do we fulfill the mission of this Academy to advance the specialty of Family Medicine through education and advocacy for the benefit of the public and its members? Over the coming year I hope to continue some of the great, ongoing work started by my predecessors. I would also like to focus on new things on the horizon that will soon affect our practices. These are a few areas the Academy will focus on in the coming year:

1. The Academy would like to educate our members about the new payment reforms from CMS that are being rolled out. To that end, we had a representative from AAFP at this year's annual meeting to talk to us about MACRA and its ramifications to our practices and reimbursements. As more details become available, we will attempt to bring you the latest information. For practices that are looking for Alternative Payment Models (APM), the Academy can help with specific information to help them utilize current resources for maximum reimbursements. For small practices that will fall under the Merit Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) the Academy can help with practice transformation to increase Clinical Practice Improvement Scores for maximum reimbursements.
2. Advocacy is a big area that needs work. I feel that a lot of practicing family physicians in our state are not engaged with our Academy and do not participate in our meetings and CME activities. Some of this could be due to busy work schedules from increased administrative burden. The medical schools in our state also have a poor record of having their students choose careers in Family Medicine. I would like to spend this year meeting with Department of Family Medicine Chairs across the state to find out why member involvement is low and how we can help increase the participation of family physicians in their individual departments and with the Academy. I would also like to meet with the deans of our four medical schools to find ways to increase medical student entry into our specialty.
3. The Academy continues to work on advocacy with the State Legislature, thanks to our Government Affairs Committee and Claudine Leone's excellent work over the years. Scopes of practice and loan repayment are some of the topics we are working on.
4. The Academy continues to provide excellent Continuing Medical Education through the annual meeting and the monographs thanks to the work done by our Deputy Executive Vice President, Theresa Barrett, PhD. I would like feedback from all our members about how we can better meet their CME needs.
5. I would like to help in any way I can with the work on physician burnout that was started by my predecessor Robert Gorman, MD. This is an important problem facing physicians especially our specialty.

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I joined this Academy to have a voice. I wanted Family Medicine to have a voice. My voice alone may not make a difference, but if I can inspire a few more of you to join us then our united voice will be stronger. As your new president, I pledge to continue working on our Academy's mission for the benefit of our members and the people of New Jersey. I am looking forward to working with our excellent staff under the leadership of Executive Vice President Ray Saputelli, MBA, CAE, with my predecessors Drs. Gorman and Bhaskarabhatla, and President Elect, Peter Carrazzone, MD.