July 1, 2020

TOMA Members

I hope this finds you all well, hopefully enjoying summer weather, and embracing the opportunity to spend extra time with family and friends. We have all been dramatically impacted, personally and professionally, by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic as it pervades our lives. In addition, we have recently seen new tumultuous and disturbing developments over the past month in the areas of race relations, politics, and public health policy. I would like to urge us all to remain calm, ensure our information comes from reliable, accurate sources and do our best – as we always do – to be great physicians. I hope you find this update helpful and informative.

In the past month, TOMA was a co-signer, along with the Tennessee Medical Association and many other Tennessee based medical specialty and clinical organizations, of the proposed significant Tennessee Safe Harbor legislation. It was crafted to provide COVID-19 related liability protections for businesses and non-profit organizations, including physician practices; unfortunately, this legislative proposal failed by only four votes in the House before it (and the Senate) adjourned until January of 2021. I strongly urge all TOMA members and other Tennessee physicians to contact your elected officials in the House (personally is always best) now, during their recess, and note your strong disappointment that this important legislative proposal failed. Take the time to determine how your elected official voted on this issue – and if they opposed it, let them know of your concern and that you will consider this in upcoming elections. Governor Lee has announced that he may consider a special call-back legislative session to address this bill pertaining to coronavirus related protections for physician practices and other concerns, which will likely include expanded telemedicine privileges for specialized providers and other issues.

In addition, also in the past month, TOMA joined the AOA in signing a letter to Senators McConnell and Schumer outlining legislative action to assist physicians, and in some cases medical students, so they can continue to see patients during and after the pandemic, including requested liability protection, the public health workforce loan repayment program, and Paycheck Protection Program eligibility for physicians, among others, to help ensure that practices remain viable and that the physician workforce is as prepared as possible for future pandemics. You are encouraged to reach out to your US Senator, asking them to support
this important grassroots campaign. As well, I’d like to encourage you to peruse the AOA’s COVID-19 Resource Center and its Telemedicine Resource Center (both on the AOA website) along with the tips to proactively market your osteopathic medical practice in these very challenging times.

I am sure you’re aware of the newly released data telling us that COVID-19 has been linked to the development of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (with cases in the USA and elsewhere in the world), that people who develop antibodies to the virus after being infected with coronavirus may not keep them for more than several weeks, especially if they had little or no symptoms to begin with, that many of the antibody tests used thus far were not accurate (with accuracy rates as low as 20% or less- and that many bypassed FDA approval), that a large surge of cases is now being seen in teens and young adults (likely due to their mobility and interactions with one another) who can be sick enough to be hospitalized or asymptomatic carriers, and that three new symptoms are now known associated with the virus, increasing the list of common symptoms to 12 – a new dirty dozen, so to speak. It is critical that we all stay well informed on the rapidly evolving picture that is COVID-19 and its complications, co-morbidities, and sequelae and treatment so that we can remain diagnostically accurate. Look to the AOA for periodic updates on this and other topics that you will no doubt find helpful.

The AOA Board of Trustees has recently approved, in order to decrease the burden placed on DOs and their practices by the pandemic, the allowance of up to 15 category 1-B CME credits to be converted to category 1-A in the 2019-2020 CME cycle; credit adjustments will appear on CME reports at the end of the current CME cycle. This is great news for those who need assistance with meeting CME requirements for board certification and/or licensure maintenance, clinical privileging, etc.

OMED 2020 and this year’s AOA House of Delegates will be virtual, out of concern for the health of osteopathic physicians, medical students and their families. The House of Delegates virtual meeting on July 18 will include the inauguration of a new president, our own Dr. Tom Ely (an event that will be capably emceed by our own Dr. Don Polk). OMED 2020 will remain an event filled with educational programs, discussions on the evolving practice of medicine, policy-making sessions, and advancement of the osteopathic profession, of our unique, physician-centered board certification program, and networking opportunities; rest assured that TOMA will be well represented at the House of Delegates and OMED 2020, even if virtually, by capable delegate members.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues and, in some cases, as cases increase, and as our society and organization face many tough issues, we must continue our focus on remaining resilient and optimistic and
stay connected to our sources of strength – our families, friends, colleagues and profession in order to maintain a healthy perspective. We want to maintain sight of the fact that the pandemic has also provided us the opportunity to witness locally and in all levels of media, countless acts of kindness which help to connect us in inspiring, comforting and reassuring ways. As a profession with a long history of helping others, we as DOs have the ability and potential to provide transformative change to not only our patients but also others in our lives and our communities. **Our responses, internally and externally, not our current situation, are what currently, and always have, defined us.** As you’ve already heard me say, the osteopathic profession has weathered troubled times many times before and we will, individually and collectively, weather this one as well. We must remain strong and help one another to do so. I ask you to check on your colleagues and let them know you’re concerned about them. It is a great and encouraging source of strength – to let others lean on you and allow yourself to do so as well.

Join me, as we look forward to Dr. Ely’s upcoming inauguration and the great things he will do for our profession and for all of us as DOs – one of our own, for the first time at the helm of the AOA! The coming year will be one of exciting change, and progress, as we all respond nimbly to the challenges ahead.

As you can see, TOMA remains active on behalf of its members and other DOs in Tennessee. We are always eager to hear your thoughts, feedback, and suggestions and welcome your participation in any of our activities or initiatives. I wish you the best as the summer continues and our local, state, national and international situations develop. By the time you read my next monthly message, Dr. Ely, a past TOMA president will be the newly elected president of the AOA and we will all have cause to celebrate – Dr. Ely and I have spoken about that very matter this past week and there will be more details forthcoming.

I leave you with poignant words for this trying time from the late Irish poet, John O’Donohue:

> This is the time to be slow,
> Lie low to the wall,
> until the bitter weather passes.

> Try, as best you can, not to let
> the wire brush of doubt
> scrape from your heart
> all sense of yourself
> and your hesitant light.
If you remain generous,  
time will come good;  
And you will find your feet  
again on fresh pastures of promise,  
where the air will be kind  
and blushed with beginning.

Stay healthy and safe.

Fraternally,

[Signature]

Michael Wieting, DO  
President