

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is an honor for me to be the 1st osteopathic physician, 1st psychiatrist and 4th woman president of the BCMA. It has been a long journey for me. It started when I read the book Arrowsmith (not the band) when I was a young girl. It was about a physician who became a researcher and found the cure to some disease which I can no longer remember, saving many people. However, when I was a young girl, women did not become physicians and everyone thought I was crazy for even entertaining the idea. They thought that if I was a doctor I could never marry or have a family. Of course at that time men who were doctors were able to marry and have families. We have come a long way now. So I became the next best thing, a nurse. When I went through all my rotations, I found that I really liked psychiatry and I found it so interesting that it didn't feel like work. I am not sure what this says about me. However, after a few years working as a nurse, I felt that I needed more knowledge in the field and went back to school to become a psychologist. After many years as a psychologist, I saw that psychiatric medications were very helpful and wanted to be able to take care of the whole patient.

I again went back to school to take my prerequisites and at 1st I didn't tell any of my friends the real reason I was taking chemistry, physics, etc. I just said I was taking them for fun. Then I began looking for medical schools. I had an informal interview with someone at University of Miami who said I was too old. I then applied at Nova Osteopathic School of medicine and I crossed my fingers, hoping I would get in. I ended up graduating from Nova as the oldest student. I went on to apply for psychiatry residency at University of Miami. Thankfully they didn't think I was too old and accepted me.

So now I finished residency and I went into practice with another psychiatrist who already had an existing practice. At this point I felt I needed to meet some people and in the past when I was a psychologist I joined the local and state organization. This is when I joined the BCMA and the 1st event I attended was the Women's networking event. I met some great people there. I began attending those events regularly. At one of the events they said they needed delegates to the FMA from Broward and I remember Caryn Singer, say why do don't you do it? I am sure she doesn't remember saying it. I became a delegate and found it fascinating of how democratic it is and how everyone has a chance to speak if they want. Of course there are some arguments, but mostly everyone went home friendly. My positive experience of being a FMA delegate led me to become a board member; then I was honored to be elected secretary, treasurer, vice president, president elect and then president.

The BCMA has provided me with support and friends and in return I would like to give back in the terms of The Physician Wellness Program – Physicians Caring for Physician which is the theme of our dinner. I am co-chair of the committee with Dr Westphall and we are trying to set up a program that provides free anonymous mental health treatment for an initial 6 sessions to physicians. We also plan to have an educational program in the future on coping with stress and burnout. Many physicians are afraid to seek mental health treatment due to the stigma and having to answer mental health questions on insurance and hospital credentialing forms. 300 to 400 physicians are committing suicide a year, about the size of a medical school. Many articles about physician suicide have been written including, one in the New

England Journal of Medicine about a medical student who suicided. A high rate percentage of those who suicide, have an existing mental health disorder that is diagnosed or undiagnosed. The culture of medicine also deters physicians from seeking mental health treatment; physicians are perceived to be “superhuman” and immune to mental health illness or mental health issues are perceived as a weakness. We know physicians are faced with increased stress of managed care, EMR’s, reduced reimbursement (increasing our patient load), increased expenses, MIPS, MACRA, and even stresses from our own organizations such as onerous requirements such as Maintenance of Certification from our own specialty boards. Given this, many physicians are facing burnout. It seems that you can’t open up your email without seeing at least one article on burnout. Many counties have already established or are establishing a wellness program. Your contributions will help us to establish ours and to bring mental health into the light and provide a service for physicians.