



GEORGIA OSTEOPATHIC
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
1902

GOMA News & Updates Volume 46, August 2024



**GOMA Sent Delegation to AOA House of
Delegates in Chicago**

By Christian Geltz, DO

The AOA House of Delegates (HOD) was held in Chicago July 19-21, 2024. Delegates from Georgia were Christian Geltz, DO, Gregory Harris, DO, Sonbol Shahid-Salles, DO, MPH, and Karen Turner, DO. PCOM Georgia in Suwanee was represented by Mierra Robinson, OMS2 and Danielle Williams, OMS2. Rajay Dockery, OMS2 and Alexandria Neal, OMS2 were the student representatives from PCOM South Georgia in Moultrie. GOMA's Executive Director, Betsy Hilt, CAE was also in attendance. There was a total of 535 delegates at this year's HOD.

Thursday evening before the HOD there was a conclave of the United Federation of Osteopathic Societies (UFOS). The UFOS has been in existence since 1979 when a small group of DO physicians banded together to form a larger voting block at HOD. By voting as a combined block the small states can advance physicians from smaller osteopathic states onto the AOA Board of Trustees (BOT) and become AOA officers. The UFOS now has 45% of the votes at the AOA HOD Meeting. Presently the UFOS has 10 members on the AOA-BOT. Dr. Teresa Hubka – our new AOA President – is from Illinois, a small AOA state. She was advanced to the AOA-BOT by the UFOS and eventually worked her way up to AOA President. At the Thursday evening conclave, the candidates for BOT positions are allowed to address the group. GOMA's President, Sonbol Shahid-Salles, DO is now on the candidate list for AOA BOT selection.

The HOD meeting begins in earnest on Friday morning. The Chicago Police Bagpipe Corp always provides a rousing presentation of the colors and this year we were treated to the hymn "Amazing Grace". 2024 is the 150th year of Osteopathic Medicine started in 1874 by A.T. Still, M.D, DO.

Dr. Monka stated that we have 197,000 DOs with 8,000 new graduates. The number of DO physicians has increased by 70% in the past 10 years and now makes up 11% of all United States physicians. The profession now boasts 41 colleges with 65

locations which amounts to 26% of all U.S. medical students. There are presently 47 countries that accept DO's as equal to their MD counterparts.

Kathleen Creason, MBA, AOA CEO, reassured the attendees that the AOA is financially strong. Ms. Creason also stated that the AOA is continuing to fight for equitable treatment by the ACGME.

Friday afternoon is when the reference committees meet. Our Dr. Karen Turner served on the Ad Hoc Committee this year.

Friday evening there was an event sponsored by the Illinois Osteopathic Medical Society and Friends to celebrate Illinois' Dr. Teresa Hubka becoming the 128th President of the AOA. Dr. Hubka is only the second woman to hold this post and she is the first OB-Gyn to become President.

Saturday was spent reviewing, amending and passing the numerous resolutions presented by the reference committees. Occasionally a resolution will evoke a lengthy and vigorous debate on the HOD floor. Such was the case for Resolutions H-630 "Prevent Criminalization of the Medical Decision Making." This resolution was to prevent overzealous state Attorney Generals and non-medical bodies from inappropriately interfering with medical decision making by osteopathic physicians. After more than an hour of discussion, H-630 was referred back to the Maine Osteopathic Association.

The A.T. Still Memorial lecture was delivered by Dr. Thomas Cavalieri, Dean of Rowen University School of Osteopathic Medicine. His lecture was titled "Osteopathic Medicine Today – What Would A.T. Still Have to Say". He talked about the fact that Dr. Still was a rebel and had disdain for the medical community in the late 1800's. He proposed and implemented the osteopathic approach to medical care – Mind, Body and Spirit.

The meeting then temporarily went 'off record' to announce that OPAC had raised \$177,000.00 over the past three days of this meeting.

Saturday ended with Dr. Hubka's inaugural speech and a lovely Presidential Inaugural Reception.

Sunday morning concluded with the election of the new AOA officers and Board of Trustees members. President-elect is Robert Piccinini, DO, an Osteopathic psychiatrist from Sterling Heights, Michigan. The remainder of the morning was spent completing committee reports and new business.

Next year's AOA HOD is set for Friday, July 18 – Sunday, July 20, 2025.



128th AOA President Teresa A. Hubka, DO, Calls for a New Era of Osteopathic Medicine

by Anne Unger, director of executive communications at the AOA

Teresa A. Hubka, DO, FACOOG (Dist.), FACOG, CS, was installed as the 128th president of the AOA last week during the AOA's annual

House of Delegates meeting in Chicago. She delivered a resounding call to action for excellence during her inauguration speech, setting forth a vision that emphasizes excellence in osteopathic distinction, physician leadership, and solidarity within the osteopathic community.

Dr. Hubka's address underscored the rich heritage and unique philosophy of osteopathic medicine and outlined ambitious initiatives aimed at advancing the future of health care delivery. Her presidency coincides with the 150th anniversary of osteopathic medicine, commemorating when A.T. Still, MD, DO, introduced the profession's fundamental concepts in 1874. Dr. Hubka emphasized that the practice of osteopathic medicine today resulted from one man's vision and that one person can make a difference.

Reflecting on her personal journey and the legacy of her father, a Navy Top Gun turned attorney driven by a relentless pursuit for excellence, Dr. Hubka drew parallels to the perseverance required to practice modern medicine. "[My father's] commitment to excellence in all things inspires me today," she shared, emphasizing the importance of resilience and continuous improvement in medical practice.

Focusing on the profession's unique philosophy, one of the key initiatives for Dr. Hubka's presidential term will be enhancing the excellence of osteopathic distinction. "Our journey as DOs is one of perseverance, innovation, resilience, and enduring commitment to excellence in patient care," she said, highlighting the profession's ability to adapt and evolve in a rapidly changing health care environment.

Dr. Hubka challenged her colleagues to embrace and celebrate their distinctiveness, urging them to push boundaries and elevate the impact of osteopathic medicine across all facets of health care. "We need to trust that there are NO BOUNDARIES for DOs. We must recognize the value we bring to the health care system and be ready to challenge stereotypes and biases head-on."

She underscored the importance of education and training in preserving the profession's legacy, advocating for early exposure to osteopathic principles and manipulative medicine for osteopathic medical students and residents. This foundational knowledge will help equip future DOs to navigate the medical landscape and excel in patient care, she said.

Addressing the critical role of physician leadership, Dr. Hubka emphasized the need for integrity, vision, and continuous learning among osteopathic leaders. "Leadership in osteopathic medicine demands not only clinical excellence but also a dedication to inspiring others towards compassionate, patient-centered care," she affirmed. Drawing on her own experiences and the mentorship she received throughout her career, she called upon current leaders to foster mentor-mentee relationships that empower the next generation of physicians.

"Physician leadership has never been more critical than it is today," Dr. Hubka stated, acknowledging the complex challenges facing health care professionals in an era of technological advancements and evolving patient needs.

In her final initiative, Dr. Hubka advocated for solidarity within the osteopathic community, stressing the importance of unity amidst a divisive health care landscape. "Together, we are stronger," she asserted, calling for increased collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and advocacy with state associations, specialty societies and key osteopathic stakeholders to amplify the voice of osteopathic physicians in shaping health care policy and reform.

"Engaging patients as active participants in their own care is fundamental to the osteopathic philosophy," Dr. Hubka reminded her colleagues, emphasizing the importance of patient-centered approaches and the role patients play in shaping health care outcomes. She also underscored the profession's commitment to advocacy and collaboration with policymakers, aiming to influence legislation that supports osteopathic principles and enhances patient care.

Concluding her address, Dr. Hubka shared a vision for the future built on collaboration, innovation and commitment to osteopathic principles. “As we celebrate our past and look forward, let us uphold the principles that define us,” she urged, calling for unity and resilience in navigating future challenges. Her vision for the future resonated deeply with the values upheld by A.T. Still and generations of osteopathic physicians, promising a future where osteopathic distinction, leadership, and solidarity will propel the profession forward in excellence for the next 150 years and beyond.

In her own words, Dr. Hubka captured the essence of the osteopathic profession’s enduring legacy: “Individually, and collectively, we will make a difference—The DO Difference!”



Mental Health & Addiction Among Physicians

Update in Urology

Travel Preparation for Primary Care

Reducing Gun Violence

Hyperbaric Medicine

Recognizing Human Trafficking & Exploitation

PAD and Venous Disease

Virtual Medicine

AOA Annual Report Charts Successes of Past Year

The 2024 AOA Annual Report outlines efforts in support of the AOA's mission to serve as the professional home for all osteopathic physicians and medical students. This year, the profession is celebrating its 150th anniversary, noted AOA Immediate Past President Ira P. Monka, DO, FAOCP (Dist.), and AOA CEO Kathleen S. Creason, MBA, in the report's intro.

[Livestream 10/20-21](#)

[View On-Demand Through December 30](#)

[Click Here for Early Registration](#)

[Available Through 9/15!](#)

“This year, we join with ^{Georgia Osteopathic Medical Association} ~~osteopathic~~ partner organizations across the globe to celebrate the 150-year history of our distinctive osteopathic philosophy, which was introduced by Andrew Taylor Still, MD, DO, in 1874,” they wrote. “Since that time, the osteopathic medical profession has evolved to become a critical pillar of our nation’s health care system, accounting for more than 11% of all physicians and 25% of all medical students in the U.S.”

Highlights from the AOA’s past year include public policy advocacy efforts to decrease regulatory burdens for physicians and expand the impact of the profession at the federal and state policymaking levels.

In addition, the AOA successfully advanced licensure and practice rights for DOs across the globe and worked to address training

barriers for osteopathic graduates seeking residency training.

Also, the AOA launched the AOA Patient Safety Organization (PSO), a federally approved program dedicated to identifying and addressing potential patient safety risks while promoting a culture of transparency and accountability. Members of the osteopathic medical profession collaborate to promote improvement opportunities by breaking down barriers to communication and fostering a culture of learning. PSO participation is complimentary for AOA members.

[Read the full report to learn more.](#)

2024 AMERICAN OSTEOPATHIC FOUNDATION
HONORS
Gala

**Drs. Lucie Mitchell and Joy Zarandy
Win Awards from AOF**

The American Osteopathic Foundation (AOF) recently announced the 2024 AOF Scholarship, Grant, and Award winners as the organization celebrated 75 years of osteopathic excellence.

GOMA Board Member Lucie E. Noriscat Mitchell, DO who practices pain medicine in Rome, Georgia was named as one of the Emerging Leaders this year.

PCOM Georgia Assistant Dean of Clinical Education & Assistant Professor of Family Medicine Joy Zarandy, DO, FAAFP, DABFM was named as the AOF Rocovich Research Grant winner.

Congratulations to 2024 AOF Awards winners Drs. Lucie Noriscat Mitchell & Joy Zarandy!

Georgia Website Will Take Over Affordable Care Act Enrollment

Abridged article by Ariel Hart, Atlanta Journal Constitution

Hundreds of thousands of Georgians who buy their health insurance on the Affordable Care Act marketplace website, healthcare.gov, will no longer be able to do that starting this year, and instead will be referred to a state-run website. When open enrollment begins Nov. 1, residents of Georgia will be blocked from the federally operated website healthcare.gov and referred instead to a state-based website, georgiaaccess.gov, reflecting the program's name, Georgia Access.

Private, federally subsidized ACA plans first began in 2013 under former President Barack Obama and also are known as "Obamacare." The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has given the state final approval to transition to its own marketplace after years of negotiation and work.

"This milestone is the result of the extraordinary work our office has conducted over the past three years to move Georgia away from reliance on the federal government for health coverage," Georgia Insurance Commissioner John King said in the news release. "The Georgia Access approach is an innovative one. It will be the first State-based Exchange to partner with private sector companies to get consumers enrolled. It represents our commitment to expand access to affordable, quality health coverage and reduce the number of uninsured Georgians."

The new state-run marketplace will bring with it millions of dollars in user fees that are collected with each policy sign-up. Until now, the fees have gone to the federal website, but Georgia will collect them now.

“This is a great milestone in connecting Georgians with the coverage they need,” said Georgia Governor Brian Kemp, who started working on a state-based insurance exchange soon after becoming governor in 2019. In a written statement, he called the initiative “common sense” and one of his top priorities. “A state-based exchange will not only make the process for Georgians getting covered easier, but will also increase their coverage options and our ability to promote quality and affordable health care plans.”

Although Georgia Access cannot yet sign people up, it contains information and links to businesses that do. The benefit of both healthcare.gov and healthsherpa.com was that they automatically calculate the federal aid from subsidies and give shoppers their final premium, then present the plans a person is eligible for so shoppers can compare coverage and prices. They also show only the plans that offer coverage meeting federal standards, thus protecting shoppers from being sold shoddy plans that don’t cover what they need.

HealthSherpa and King’s office did not respond to questions posed by the author whether HealthSherpa would continue offering sign-ups in Georgia after the state opens Georgia Access.

The concern patient advocates have about shopping directly with insurance companies or agents is that they are motivated to show people plans that will make their business more money, rather than plans that will give people the best coverage. Some patients have reported being switched into insurance plans that gutted their coverage and left them thousands of dollars in debt.

Federal laws meant to protect shoppers from shoddy coverage are still in force. King’s office has always overseen approval of Georgia’s ACA insurance offerings, and it will continue to do so.

[Read full article here.](#)



Nevedha Balaji, DO Writes Up Case of Bacteremia in a CLL Patient in Cureus Magazine

The April 10, 2024, issue of *Cureus Magazine* featured an article by Nevedha Balaji, DO, as the lead author. She is a graduate of PCOM Georgia in Suwanee and is currently doing an internal medicine residency at Northeast Georgia Health System. Co-authors included other IM residents: Aarushi Kalra, DO; Aleksandra P. Ignatowicz, DO.

It was a case of a 53-year-old man who was diagnosed with *Leclercia adecarboxylata* bacteremia in the setting of Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia. *Leclercia adecarboxylata* is a Gram-negative bacillus commonly seen in immunocompromised individuals and often misdiagnosed as *Escherichia coli*. *L. adecarboxylata* is an opportunistic pathogen found in aquatic environments. It is a nonfatal infection that has low virulence and endorses susceptibility to many common antibiotics.

[Read the case study here.](#)



PCOM Georgia Students Doctors Tyler Talik and Mo Olocha Win 5K Race

Did you know that PCOM Georgia med students took first place at this year's annual Button Down Dash 5K, held by the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce in Suwanee Town Center?

Tyler Talik (DO '28) and Mo Olocha (DO '27) came in first overall in the race's respective male and female categories! (They are pictured on either side of Gwinnett Chamber President & CEO, Nick Masino)

PCOM Georgia represented with a number of eager runners in addition to student and faculty volunteers who offered blood pressure checks and wellness education thanks to the Community Wellness Initiative.

Drug Name	Participating Drug Company	Commonly Treated Conditions	Agreed to Negotiated Price for 30-day Supply for CY 2026	List Price for 30-day Supply, CY 2023	Discount of Negotiated Price from 2023 List Price	Total Part D Gross Covered Prescription Drug Costs, CY 2023	Number of Medicare Part D Enrollees Who Used the Drug, CY 2023
Januvia	Merck Sharp Dohme	Diabetes	\$113.00	\$527.00	79%	\$4,091,399,000	843,000
Fiasp; Fiasp FlexTouch; Fiasp PenFill; NovoLog; NovoLog FlexPen; NovoLog PenFill	Novo Nordisk Inc	Diabetes	\$119.00	\$495.00	76%	\$2,612,719,000	785,000
Farxiga	AstraZeneca AB	Diabetes; Heart failure; Chronic kidney disease	\$178.50	\$556.00	68%	\$4,342,594,000	994,000
Enbrel	Immunex Corporation	Rheumatoid arthritis; Psoriasis; Psoriatic arthritis	\$2,355.00	\$7,106.00	67%	\$2,951,778,000	48,000
Jardiance	Boehringer Ingelheim	Diabetes; Heart failure; Chronic kidney disease	\$197.00	\$573.00	66%	\$8,840,947,000	1,883,000
Stelara	Janssen Biotech, Inc.	Psoriasis; Psoriatic arthritis; Crohn's disease; Ulcerative colitis	\$4,695.00	\$13,836.00	66%	\$2,988,560,000	23,000
Xarelto	Janssen Pharms	Prevention and treatment of blood clots; Reduction of risk for patients with coronary or peripheral artery disease	\$197.00	\$517.00	62%	\$6,309,766,000	1,324,000
Eliquis	Bristol Myers Squibb	Prevention and treatment of blood clots	\$231.00	\$521.00	56%	\$18,275,108,000	3,928,000
Entresto	Novartis Pharms Corp	Heart failure	\$295.00	\$628.00	53%	\$3,430,753,000	664,000
Imbruvica	Pharmacyclics LLC	Blood cancers	\$9,319.00	\$14,934.00	38%	\$2,371,858,000	17,000

Biden-Harris Administration Announces New, Lower Prices for First 10 Drugs for Medicare Patients

After months of back-and-forth, the CMS has released the final maximum fair prices for the first 10 drugs hit by the IRA's price negotiation program. First impression: Steep discounts all around, though obviously some treatments were more affected than others. According to senior officials in the Biden administration, the system-wide effect of these price cuts will be huge. In 2026, the first year that the new prices will take effect, Medicare expects to see \$6 billion in savings, while its beneficiaries will shell out \$1.5 billion less, on these drugs.

Drugmakers, which have launched an aggressive but so far unsuccessful legal campaign to block the negotiations, have in

recent weeks expressed confidence that the new prices would not substantially affect their businesses.

[Read more details here.](#)

In Other Words

“Anyone who says he can see through women is missing a lot.”

– Groucho Marx, comedian