

Family Medicine Updates



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OUR TIME IS NOW: AAFP PRESIDENT PLEDGES TO FIGHT FOR RESPECT AND RESOURCES

Newly installed AAFP President Wanda Filer, MD, MBA, of York, Pennsylvania, stood on stage in front of a packed theater in Denver, Colorado on September 30 to officially open the AAFP's 2015 Family Medicine Experience (FMX).

Filer began her inaugural address by saying to her family physician colleagues, "Our time is now. America is hungry for answers to a broken US health care system."

She said that patients, companies that purchase health care, and even payers were recognizing the value of family medicine.

"We have tapped into what America needs," said Filer. "We are the answer to what ails the US health care system." And that answer is a system built on a primary care foundation with the strong support of family medicine.

Filer spoke enthusiastically about the launch just 1 year ago of Family Medicine for America's Health, (<http://fmahealth.org/>) a project to which the AAFP and 7 other family medicine organizations contributed heavily.

"Family medicine is building a volunteer army; Family Medicine for America's Health is the organizer of that army, and we need every single one of you on board," said Filer.

She made sure the audience was aware of the accompanying Health is Primary (<http://www.healthisprimary.org/>) communications campaign, which she said was designed to blanket the American public with powerful messages about the importance of primary care. She reported that evidence showed Americans were getting that message.

"One out of 3 Americans has seen the Health is Primary campaign," said Filer. "We're only in the first year and our pace is escalating."

In fact, she continued, "Americans who have seen these messages are able to tell us that having a family physician keeps them healthier, keeps their families healthier, keeps their communities healthier. That's exactly the message we need them to hear."

The public has stepped up to the plate in other ways, too, with many Americans telling their friends and neighbors that family medicine is "the best buy in American health care," she added.

Filer championed medical students and family medicine residents, calling them an "amazing group of people" who are committed to their profession and to their patients.

"They are our future," she said. "I am so proud to tell you that this next generation, the people who are coming behind many of us in family medicine, are an unbelievable gift to this country and to our profession."

The AAFP president noted that 1 of 4 US medical students is an Academy member—meaning that some 30,500 medical students have joined the ranks.

But Filer cautioned that piquing students' interest was not enough. "It's also about closing the deal and asking those talented, gifted, committed students to match to family medicine," she said. Family physicians need to let them know that as residency programs expand, there will be homes for them.

Filer implored her audience to maintain their energy and enthusiasm for the specialty.

"Talk to those students or potential students about why you went into medicine and why you chose family medicine," she said. "I know you have extraordinary stories, because we all have extraordinary stories."

She asked family physicians to share those stories with students who need to understand the value of physician-patient relationships.

Filer shared "good news" about policy makers who were finally "waking up and supporting and validating our work."

"They're surprised," said Filer. "They're impressed when we show them data about the complexity of what we see in the office."

She drew laughter from the audience when she said she still runs into people who think family physicians take care of just sore throats and head colds.

"And I say, 'Please, God, give me someone with a sore throat or a head cold.'"

Instead, said Filer, she most often sees very complicated patients, like the one a week earlier to whom she assigned 11 diagnoses. "It took me 25 minutes to take care of that patient and 25 minutes to put it into the electronic health record," she said with a smile the audience both understood and appreciated.

Filer told her colleagues that the Academy was advocating for value-based payment because it refused to wait for someone else to dictate the future of family medicine.

She said value-based payment “finally recognizes our enormous contribution to the health care of this nation by paying differently—and better—for primary care.”

She urged colleagues not to misunderstand her message: “Through the Health is Primary campaign, family medicine owns primary care. We are primary care for this country.”

Filer acknowledged the hardship of undergoing massive change in a practice setting. She’s going through it, too.

“It’s messy, it’s hard, it’s painful, it’s uneven. I’m on the 4th electronic health record of my career, and one of these days we’ll have one that works well,” she said.

She called the old health care system unsustainable. “We had a lot of fragmented care and it was endangering the future of America. It was burning out talented, committed physicians and using too many dollars for inadequate outcomes and ... that duplicative care... we see all too often”, she said.

Filer reasoned that some of that money could have been better spent on education, on housing and on food security.

Family medicine has the answers, said Filer. Suddenly, “Everyone wants to talk to family medicine.”

She looked out into her audience and reminded her colleagues that 1 out of 5 patient visits in the United States are to family physician offices.

“So as I go out to state chapter meetings—and there are frequently legislators there—or into the halls of Congress in Washington, we tell them that 20% of visits in this country are done by family physicians, and we talk about an unstoppable force that could improve the health of this nation” if only they would give family physicians the resources they need, said Filer.

The new AAFP president vowed to fight for primary care and to ensure it is valued and respected.

“I commit to you that I will spend a year making sure we get a hell of a lot of respect,” said Filer, as the audience cheered her on.

Filer encouraged her listeners to stay engaged by staying tuned in to news about Family Medicine for America’s Health and responding to Speak Out calls (<http://grassroots.aafp.org/aafp/speakout>) when the Academy needs help persuading lawmakers in Washington.

She urged members to be proactive in their practices and to become medical homes so they’ll be ready when rapidly evolving payment models head in that direction.

“You will want to be there,” she promised.

Filer pledged to share family medicine’s story, to strengthen family medicine’s reputation and to “get us the resources we need to get back to the real work of family medicine: caring for America.”

Sheri Porter
AAFP News Department



From the American
Board of Family Medicine

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PISACANO LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION NAMES 2015 PISACANO SCHOLARS

The Pisacano Leadership Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM), recently selected its 2015 Pisacano Scholars. These 6 medical students follow in the footsteps of 100 scholar alumni who are practicing physicians and 19 current scholars who are enrolled in medical schools or family medicine residency programs across the country. The Pisacano Leadership Foundation was created in 1990 by the ABFM in tribute to its founder and first executive director, Nicholas J. Pisacano, MD (1924–1990). Each Pisacano Scholar has demonstrated the highest level of leadership, academic achievement, communication skills, community service, and character and integrity.



Paige Bennett is a fourth-year medical student at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Paige graduated from the University of Colorado, Boulder (CU Boulder) with distinction with a Bachelor of Arts in Integrative Physiology.

As an undergraduate Paige received multiple scholarships and served on the student government board at CU Boulder. She also worked throughout college as a medical assistant at a free teenage gynecology clinic.

Paige developed and has been involved in a teen obesity community-based research project since beginning medical school. The inspiration for this project came from repeated experiences of witnessing conversations between health care providers and teenagers that humiliated the teens, rather than empowering them to make better choices.

As a military scholar through the Navy Health Professions Scholarship Program, Paige has committed to at least 4 years of active duty and 4 years in reserves following the completion of training. As the granddaughter of a military veteran, Paige quickly realized the greatest way she could serve was to provide medical care for sailors and their families who are sacrificing for our country. Following her military career, Paige intends to pursue