

Good evening,

I am here before you today having been inaugurated as the 183rd President of the Connecticut State Medical Society. It is the first time that a retina specialist has the honor of leading CSMS. I want to extend my sincere thanks to all of the physicians of Connecticut who have put confidence in me to lead this esteemed organization. I am honored to continue the exemplary work that our previous presidents have started, and to build on their success and dedication.

There are a number of people I want to thank. Thanks to my immediate predecessor Dr. Greg Shangold, officers, and councilors of CSMS, and the leadership of county medical organizations. Also, thanks to Dr. Robert Russo and the staff of CSMS: Layne Gakos, Denise Tyrrell, Susan Suckley and Rebecca Yungk .

Thank you is not strong enough to convey my appreciation to my wife, Shirin and our daughter Sophia for their endless support of my work and endeavors. They have made many sacrifices so that I can put energy and time into leading this great organization. Also, I'd like to thank my parents, and mentors who gave me roots to grow, and wings to fly.

I begin my Presidency excited by the prospects of what we can achieve, and also keenly aware of the mountain of challenges that stand before us.

In an organization such as ours where a new President is inaugurated each year, we must strive to continue the momentum gained with each successive presidency. This past year, a large focus of our legislative agenda was on removing obstacles to care including the ever-growing concept of the high deductible health plans, prior authorizations and other health insurer-created impediments that became a barrier for physicians striving to provide quality care

for their patients. Prior authorizations are bad for patients, and bad for healthcare. We will continue the effort to overcome these challenges.

The Covid-19 pandemic has tested all of our resolve as physicians. In one sense, it has united the medical community to work to control this pandemic and at the same time it has accelerated the already-troublesome trend of physician burnout. It is alarming that almost half of the physicians in the country have experienced burn out. The electronic medical records have added about two hours per day to the long hours of physician workload. Studies have shown that physicians have higher resilience than general public, but the rate of suicide among physicians is twice as many as the general population. This is the result of stress, excessive workload, and demanding work environment. Physicians are burdened with unnecessary mandates and tasks. Physician well-being should be a priority for our healthcare system. To have a healthy society, we need healthy physicians. Let physicians do what they do best: heal the patient, comfort the suffering, enhance public health, and discover new treatments. CSMS advocates against administrative burdens that add to your workload and stop you from caring for your patients. Organizational and systematic approaches are needed to improve work environment, reduce administrative burden, and provide work life balance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the tremendous role that social determinants of health play in the wellbeing of our patients. Health literacy, health equity and breaking down racial and ethnic barriers to care must be a focus of CSMS. Last session, CSMS supported and championed legislation that establishes various working groups to explore further the impact of social

determinants of health into the welfare of Connecticut's residents. I plan to expand CSMS efforts on health equity.

We often hear of the distinction between the "employed physician" and the "independent physician." We are, however, all physicians. Regardless of our employment status, we all took the same Oath, and we are all healers. As President, I want to focus on what unites us all – the practice of medicine, the science of medicine, and the future of medicine in Connecticut.

We as physicians need to be more invested in the future of medicine in our state. A key goal of my presidency will be to reach out to our younger generation of physicians and our 4,000 medical students, residents, and fellows to address the issues that are important to physicians in training and young physicians. We are in this together. We must serve as mentors and role-models for physicians in training. We just initiated the Medical Education Committee and invited leaders of all three medical schools in Connecticut to join CSMS efforts. This past session, we made headway on loan forgiveness programs that would help to retain our medical talent here in Connecticut. We must continue on that path so that there is a truly bright future for the practice of medicine in our great state. I have the privilege of working with our students and residents on a daily basis. The future belongs to them, and the future is bright because of them.

As you have also heard, the membership of CSMS has adopted revised Bylaws that reorganize the leadership structure of the state medical society. As President, I also serve as the inaugural Chair of the newly formed Board of Directors. As the Chair of this nine-person Board, one of my efforts will be to bring more diversity to the physician leadership of CSMS. In our history, we have

only had two female Presidents of this Society. The good news is that currently 52% of our 1240 medical students are women. If we are doing something right, If we are doing something right, in the future we will have a gender balance in the leadership of CSMS.

On a more personal note, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of the physicians and members of the medical community whose work during this pandemic has been nothing short of heroic. You are all healers, you are all healthcare heroes. As we continue to navigate the uncharted waters of COVID-19, we must band together to keep our medical community strong and resilient.

The Presidency of CSMS is truly a team effort, and I look to all physicians in Connecticut to join our team as we work together to improve the practice of medicine for our patients and physicians. It is not about what we imagine for our future, it is about what we do for the future of medicine. Together, Together, we can uplift our profession. Together, we can enhance public health.

Thank you.