President's Message
Dr. Daniel Pomerantz

This past weekend we observed National Doctors’ Day. I saw many expressions of thanks directed to physicians. Some from individuals and professional organizations inspired me, while others rang hollow. The thank you’s that left me unmoved came from employers who made minimal expressions of gratitude without acknowledging their role in making our jobs difficult. A large and growing number of physicians are employed by large health care organizations, and many are employed by investor-owned practices that are part of vertically integrated, highly financialized health insurance companies. In too many cases, physicians are working for organizations and institutions that profess their mission to be serving patients, while their every action expresses their true mission, generating revenue. We should take care of patients because that is what we do, and it is appropriate to get paid for doing that. We should not focus on “delivering healthcare” in order to get paid. The US has failed to support outpatient physician practices, especially in primary care. Medicare reimbursements for outpatient care have stagnated for two decades. The only way to generate more revenue is to squeeze more patients into each day. This is unsustainable. Primary care physicians spend hours after work and on weekends trying to catch up on charting and other EHR tasks that can’t possibly all fit into a reasonable workday. Wendy Dean writes and speaks about the moral injury that happens when someone feels pressured to choose between making the system work and doing the right thing. Too often the system’s need to keep generating revenue forces physicians to hurry through visits with patients and to shorten time with family to devote time to finishing charting and other tasks.

I hope that we can get to work on making medical practice, especially primary care, more accessible for patients, more sustainable for physicians, and less likely to cause moral injury. Dr. Seuss wrote The Lorax in 1971 about looming environmental crises. In it the Once-ler tells the story of his discovery of Truffula trees and how in his haste and greed, he cut down all the trees to make them into thneeds (which truly no one needs). He ignores the warnings of the Lorax and ultimately destroys not only the habitat for all the native creatures—Swomee-Swans, Bar-ba-loots, and Humming Fish—and poisons the environment, he also renders the land unfit for his family. There are people speaking out about the crisis in primary care, but I worry that the Once-ler impulse to consume everything in sight may not be restrained in time for primary care to recover and thrive.

NYACP and ACP are working hard to preserve and expand support for primary care and all Internal Medicine. I hope that you will join us in advocating for our patients and colleagues. NYACP advocacy week will take place in early May. NYACP and ACP occasionally send out Calls to Action asking members to contact legislators about issues important to IM practice. When you see a Call to Action, please take a moment to click through; it only takes a few minutes to let our legislators know how you feel. By the time this is published the NYS Presidential primary election will be over, but there is another primary election on June 25 (you can register to vote in this primary until June 14), and on or before Election Day, November 5, 2024, you will be able to cast your vote for President and Congressional representatives. You can register for the general election until October 26, 2024. You can check your voter registration and get additional information about state and local elections at vote411.org. Please register, learn about the issues, and vote. Please encourage your patients to do the same.
This will be my last column as President of NYACP. It has been an honor to serve an organization that is dedicated to making things better for physicians and patients. I look forward to continuing to work with NYACP for many more years. After the ACP’s Internal Medicine Meeting in Boston later this month, **Dr. Susan Lee**, the Governor from the Long Island Region, will step up to become President of the Chapter, and as my term as Governor for the Hudson Valley Region comes to an end, **Dr. Donna Morrison**, currently Governor-Elect, will become the Governor for the Hudson Valley Region. I have been very fortunate to work with an extraordinary group of people who have challenged me, supported me, and done the hard work of making our chapter work for all our members. I wish I could name everyone here; however, there are some people who deserve special mention. First, I want to acknowledge our staff, without whom we would get almost nothing done, and certainly not nearly as successfully. Amanda Allen, Karen Tucker Labello, Izaiah Wright, Tasha Mathew, and our Executive Director, Loretta Ponesse. I also want to acknowledge Lisa Noel, who recently retired, and our past Executive Directors, Heather Bennett and Linda Lambert. I am grateful for all the work they have done on behalf of our members. I also want to acknowledge the many former governors whose advice and support has been crucial to the ongoing success of our Chapter. I especially want to thank my colleagues this past year on the Executive committee, not only Susan Lee and Donna Morrison, but also, John Hall (Upstate), Todd Simon (Brooklyn/Queens/Staten Island), Michael LoCurcio (Manhattan/Bronx), and Jitendra Barmecha, my predecessor as President. In addition, I want to welcome **Dr. Paula Lester** who is currently the Governor-Elect Designee for the Long Island Region and will become the Governor-elect later this month. I look forward to seeing many of you at the IM meeting in Boston, and at future chapter events.

With gratitude,

Daniel Pomerantz, MD, FACP

NYACP President