

2019 Convocation President's Address

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And so a year has passed. A year is a short time. A year is a glimpse. I hope the year has been of benefit.

Some of you are here for the first time. Some of you are here as an annual experience. Some come from time to time. Some of you are med students. Some of you are residents. Some of you are sub-specialty fellows. Some are academics, some in practice, and some of us, well-seasoned. Some are international. Some are retired. Some are sub-specialists. Some of you are non-physician members. And more. To each and every one of you, I very humbly say, "Thank you. Thank you for being here."

The American College of Physicians has been my professional home since residency. Like you, I have grown with the College and it is safe to say that the College too has grown with us, for the College is us, and we are the College.

I came to residency bearing witness to the experience that the practice of medicine was shaped by more than those who practice medicine, and that given that reality, it was incumbent on those of us who care for patients to engage. "We're either part of the solution or we'll be left out of the solution," I remember my professors saying. Now, the phrase, I think is more, "You better be at the table, or don't be surprised if you're served up at the table." Yes, these are harsher times.

It is our commitment to a meliorism, to leaving the world a bit better today than yesterday that fuels our engagement and passion forward and brings us , and brings us to today.

I have often thought that this talk should be given on the day the presidency year starts instead of at its end. The vision, the path for each president is slightly different and somewhat guided by the events of the day. Although communicating with you at the initial juncture, is an approach, we do this as a retrospective, and perhaps the retro-scope is more powerful, more accountable.

My goal, my vision is that we come together. Our house of medicine is fragmented, and fragmentation adversely impacts patient care.

That has been the theme for the past 12 months, a coming together—a spirit of inclusion: across the Chapters, across national borders, across health professions, across specialties, across professional societies. From Group of Six Fly Ins to Capitol Hill that engage front line physician professional societies on issues of common concern, to Summits with the Society for Hospital Medicine and the Society of General Internal Medicine, to Health Equity Conversations with leading professional societies, to interprofessional gatherings to support team-based care, and more. In this year of global transition, the theme of inclusion has strengthened and widened our horizon so possibilities can become probabilities and probabilities can give fruit to innovation. The constant mantra has been inclusion fuels wellness and wellness fuels innovation.

We are practicing our profession amidst an explosion of health information and data. And we have learned that information does not mean knowledge, and knowledge does not yield wisdom. Neither we nor our patients can navigate the data mines before us without guidance. Successful navigation jettisons us forward with lessons earned—, lessons of partnership, collaboration, and shared expertise. Let's always remember to ask—who are the others contributing to the work and how can we work better together, for the benefit of the patient. Each of us can foster inclusion.

Over the last year, I have had the incredible privilege and honor to meet, to speak, and to engage many of you in your own practice habitat. Thank you. Thank you for welcoming me. Thank you for your openness, and thank you for sharing your goals, your passion, your vision and where you perceive ACP is there with you and where you perceive ACP could be there better. Thank you for the lessons learned. My most significant observation is that though each of us practices in a slightly different setting, in a slightly different manner, our needs and concerns are incredibly similar across our regions, across our country, and even across the planet. This is not to deny the uniqueness, but there are great commonalities in the issues that we are facing across inpatient/outpatient, specialist/subspecialist boundaries. How do we best educate, nurture, and grow our field? How do we support equity in the profession- the pipeline? salary equity? Advancement? parental leave? How do we address inequities in care and support health equity

from prevention to end-of-life? And how do we create a clinical practice that serves patient needs in a setting where clinicians flourish?

ACP's work and leadership is palpable in each of these areas because it is your work. I invite to celebrate your accomplishments. We must celebrate successes, continue our conversations, initiate new conversations, and engage at the level that suits each of us best.

What I have learned is ACP is You and You are ACP. Our organization's strength is us. Our organization's weakness is us. Let's continue to come together. Let's continue to engage with honesty and clarity. The tea leaves do not only reveal blue skies. Some have labeled these as dangerous times with growing health care costs, increases in chronic illness, the obesity epidemic, the opioid epidemic, the health impact of climate change, the return of preventable illnesses, and more. Still, the poet notes, "...where the danger is, also grows the saving power." Let's continue in trust with that renewed resilience. We have great opportunity to move forward and to shape a powerful future.

This has been a great year. It has been a year and time of tremendous gratitude. Thanks to all of you, the members, and the wonderful staff and leadership at ACP. Thanks to you, my mentors, my friends, and my family. And most especially deep gratitude to my parents, my very first mentors, without whom nothing in my life would have been possible. Thank you for introducing me to the wonder of medicine, science, and compassion. Thank you, to my native land Bolivia, the land and sky that served as my first cradle, to all who helped pave the way, and to my children for their patience, wisdom, and passion—I learn from you every day.

And so I close with my very favorite quote in medicine, what I share with every single student, resident, fellow, and mentee, and what I consider truly to be my North Star. It is a secret to be echoed from the mountain tops and whispered in close gatherings. "The secret for caring for the patient is caring for the patient." Ours is an ethic of care. Ours is a profession of care. Let us move forward with care for ourselves, with care for each other, with care for our patients, with care for our community, and with care for our planet. Healing is our mission. ACP is our professional organization, and its mission is to help us fulfill ours.

Thank you.