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“How are you currently advocating for the osteopathic profession and what are your plans to increase your advocacy efforts in the future?”

The first step toward advocating for the osteopathic profession is understanding the field, its history, challenges, and advantages. There are approximately 40,000 DOs in practice in the United States, and the majority of them don't practice to the full extent of their degree. At this stage of my career, I am learning from mentors, textbooks, journals, and extracurricular courses to gain a greater understanding of the field for which I want to be an advocate. Osteopathic medicine has progressed from another course in school into a way of being that has permeated beyond just patient care. I am starting to feel the ebb and flow of fluids and conceptualize the dynamics of the human experience in a way I had not been able to prior to this year. Having a way to help people beyond imaging, prescriptions and interventions empowers me to be a guide of healing more than someone who just sees the disease, not the whole person suffering from it.

Most patients in Northern Arizona have never heard of a DO, and many are hesitant to take more and more prescriptions. At a family medicine clinic in Williams, AZ, I treated one woman for low back and pelvic pain shortly before the completion of the rotation. The improvement she felt with my treatment prompted her to see the attending DO who had recently started in the same practice. Her continued work led to the resolution of decades of debilitating back pain that had required almost daily muscle relaxers and NSAIDs. Practicing osteopathically caters to the type of medicine that many patients appreciate or even seek out, but it also helps reduce the cost of healthcare by improving pain and reducing the need for prescription medications. Offering OMT in the clinic occurs on the shoulders of advocates who have successfully navigated billing and coding and won reimbursement for OMT, a crucial step toward recognition and compensation for our skills. Fighting for appropriate compensation and reduced overhead burden has been a struggle for many osteopaths and family physicians, my intended career path.

I have been an active member of Physicians for a National Health Program which advocates for a single-payer system which would remove unnecessary barriers to care, decrease price inflation, and allow patients free choice of their physician and hospital. Electronic health record interoperability is another massive shortcoming in our current healthcare system,

and is a source of frustration for patients and physicians alike. In the Master of Public Health program I am currently learning the background behind the evident frustration in clinics where patient care is slowed- sometimes dangerously so- due to poor communication. Our fragmented healthcare system would be improved for both patients and doctors if united by a single-payer system and electronic health record interoperability. I will continue to be a voice advocating for these massive, necessary changes while practicing osteopathically on the smaller scale. I am grateful for the opportunity to build on the work of prior physicians towards a better future of healthcare.