

FAFP MARCH MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

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As an academic physician, I live and breathe the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) requirements. While I do not appreciate all the recent changes the ACGME has made, I am proud of this statement that is part of the ACGME Family Medicine definition of specialty: “Family physicians advocate for social justice and ethical principles to remove barriers to equitable care for all populations. They advocate for their patients through the development and promotion of health policy by working with local organizations and partnering to promote better health within the intricacies of the health care system.”

As my 20 year reunion from medical school graduation looms this year, I have reflected many times on why I chose this particular specialty, would I choose it again, and if I have accomplished anything good. After I completed my residency training, I opened a solo-private practice that grew and flourished. It was a wonderful time of caring for my patients in my community. It was everything I had worked towards and I was providing outpatient care, inpatient care to adults, pediatrics and nursery. However, it

was really only working for my privately insured or Medicare patients. I was seeing indigent patients at a free clinic and my office could not financially accept many adult Medicaid patients. I was inundated with increasing administrative burden, decreased reimbursement and declining *joie de vivre*. The office I had loved became a hamster wheel that I desperately wanted to get off.

When I transitioned to academic medicine, I was determined to bring back what had drawn me to family medicine. As the Associate Program Director at Halifax Health Family Medicine Residency Program in Daytona Beach, I have been able to focus on combating health inequities, working towards social justice and advocating for Family Medicine - physicians and patients. I was blessed to be selected as an American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) Health Equity Fellow which allowed me to jumpstart this work.

To me, a “family” is made up of equal members, with equal opportunities, and resources. A “family” is built on relationships, communication, and trust. Therefore, as a Family Physician, my goal in this phase

of my career is to focus on equality and relationships with my patients, my colleagues, and my community as my family in three main areas: education, opportunities, and advocacy. I am focused on education of residents and of physicians at the local and national level regarding health equity, social determinants of health, and special health considerations for historically disadvantaged populations. I am equally determined to bolster opportunities and resources for those that have been traditionally underrepresented in medicine. I continue to advocate for health care reform, keeping politics out of our exam rooms, and our scope of practice.

Why did I choose Family Medicine? It is fundamentally who I am. Would I choose it again? 100%. Have I accomplished anything good? As a family physician, wife, mom of four children, educator, and administrator, I look at all of the successes of my patients, colleagues, husband, children, residents, and medical students. Being a part of all of that is definitely something good. I am looking forward to my next 20 years.