



# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

## Why Family Medicine Matters Now More Than Ever

Gautam J. Desai, DO, FACOFP *dist.*

In a digital world where misinformation spreads faster than the truth, osteopathic family medicine has never been more essential. As the trusted first point of contact, primary care physicians are often the only consistent voice guiding patients through the noise. Whether it's social media-fueled myths about vaccines, misleading wellness trends, or the politicization of healthcare delivery, patients are overwhelmed. They're searching for reliable, compassionate care that sees them as whole people, not just symptoms. That's where we come in.

The keynote speaker at ACOFP's April convention, Mikhail Varshavski, DO (Doctor Mike to his 25 million followers on social media, <https://www.doctormikemedia.com>), uses his digital platform to counter health misinformation. An osteopathic family physician who is committed to educating his patients and followers, he commented on how so many people worldwide use the internet as their trusted source of medical information and advice. Accordingly, Dr. Varshavski is using his presence on the internet to provide a reliable source of medical information. His work can inspire us to use our own influence to do the same. Not all of us are trained in how to deal with the pitfalls of social media, but DOs are uniquely trained to provide comprehensive continuous care that considers physical, mental, and social health, using the principles and practices of osteopathy to build lasting relationships with our patients and communities. We don't just treat illness, but aim to prevent disease, and in doing so, help our patients make informed decisions grounded in science and empathy. The bond between a patient and their family doctor remains one of the most powerful tools in medicine. We can act as educators for our patients and as a trusted resource and sounding board for their health questions and medical needs.

In spite of the importance of our specialty, family medicine is facing a major challenge to our future workforce: unfilled residency spots. This year saw a match rate of 85% for family medicine, partially explained by an increase in residency spots available, but still below the match rates for many other specialties. This is more than a workforce issue—it's a public health crisis in the making. If we want to ensure that every patient has access to high-quality holistic care, we need to invest in the pipeline. That starts with mentorship, advocacy, and outreach.

We need to do everything we can to communicate the advantages of family medicine as a career for osteopathic medical students. We must actively engage students and pre-med hopefuls to consider family medicine not as a fallback, but as a first choice. We can share our stories, highlight the breadth of our practice, and create opportunities for shadowing and connection. Just one conversation can spark a career. One moment of encouragement can shape the future of our profession. Let's not underestimate the influence we carry when we say, "You'd make a great family doctor." Think of all the things that osteopathic family physicians do. Whether serving our country in the highest ranks of the military, providing sideline coverage at the Olympics, having practices focused on procedures/cosmetics, or just taking care of patients and communities, we do it all.

These moments of influence are just one of the reasons that I've made mentorship one of the focuses of my year as ACOFP president. I am also returning to another theme I touched on during my presidential address at the recent ACOFP convention: gratitude. It's easy to get caught up in the immediacy of what's next and what's most urgent. But it's just as important to pause and appreciate those who helped us get here.

So, I offer a small challenge: send a message today. Text a mentor who saw something in you before you saw it in yourself. Call a colleague who got you through a tough rotation. Email the residency director who gave you a chance. Let them know their impact mattered. In doing so, we not only honor our past, we strengthen the bonds that will carry this profession forward.

Family medicine is the foundation of our healthcare system, and we need more champions willing to carry the torch. By leading with clarity, compassion, and gratitude, we can cut through the noise—and help shape a healthier, more connected future for everyone.

Warm regards,

Gautam J. Desai, DO, FACOFP *dist.*

2025-2026 President, American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians