

# President's Statement

## Joys of Service to the Profession

During a rotating externship after my first year of medical school, I spent a day with an ophthalmologist and immediately knew, without question, that the noble profession of ophthalmology was the one that I wished to pursue.

As ophthalmologists, we are highly privileged to serve our patients in a way that is meaningful not only to them but also to us as physicians. This service to our patients forms the foundation for what we all do, but the opportunities for service extend far beyond clinical practice.

Throughout my career, I have been guided by a desire to give back to and make a difference in a profession that has provided truly incredible opportunities. I have been fortunate to be involved with the American Glaucoma Society, the American Board of Ophthalmology, the Oklahoma Academy of Ophthalmology, and, of course, the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO). To be engaged in the activities of these organizations has represented a very satisfying, even joyful, experience, the essence of which is captured by a simple but powerful verse penned by Rabindranath Tagore, Nobel laureate and revered poet of India:

*"I slept and dreamt that life was joy;  
I awoke and saw that life was service;  
I acted, and, behold, service was joy."*

As ophthalmologists, we are gifted with the ability to help preserve and restore the precious sense of sight. In

this period of uncertainty with respect to equitable reimbursement for our services and the future direction of health care, we could easily focus exclusively on our clinical and surgical practices. However, we must resist this temptation and remain committed to service to the profession at large, which brings its own set of rewards.

How can we better serve our profession? First, we must recognize the importance of active and engaged membership in key societies. Although the Academy is fortunate that 93 percent of U.S. ophthalmologists are members, this percentage is lower for state societies. It is extremely important that we join the Academy *and* our state ophthalmology societies and actively support their vital educational and advocacy-related activities. Involvement in our subspecialty and state medical societies can also be highly impactful.

Second, when given opportunities to serve or lead, we should choose to accept them. We cannot and should not assume that our colleagues are more qualified, willing, or able to personally visit with state or national legislators or to take on responsibilities at the local, state, or national level. Active engagement must result from conscious and deliberate personal choices and a desire to develop and refine our leadership skills.

And third, we must share not only our time, energy, and talent, but also our financial resources. Support for

OphthPAC, the Surgical Scope Fund, and the AAO Foundation has never been more important to advancing patient advocacy, quality of care, and the educational and other vital programs of the Academy and of the profession.

My service on the Academy Board of Trustees has strengthened the respect and admiration I hold for the amazingly dedicated Academy staff and the hundreds of Academy members who willingly give of themselves in support of our profession. I sincerely hope that in the year ahead, even more of my colleagues will take the opportunity to experience the impact, satisfaction, and joy of service. Our future absolutely depends on it.



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2014 ACADEMY PRESIDENT