



January 1, 2021

Happy New Year!

All of us at TOMA hope you had a safe, healthy, and pleasant holiday.

Since you heard from me last, despite the holiday season, TOMA has been working hard on behalf of all Tennessee DOs and our other physician colleagues. You may remember my previous mention of the Coalition for Collaborative Care (CCC), made up of TOMA and numerous other physician organizations in Tennessee. In December, the Coalition had a meeting, organized by our own Executive Director Betsy Hilt, with Governor Lee's staff: Garnet Decosimo, Gov. Lee's Director of Legislation and Alexa Witcher, Tennessee Department of Health Assistant Commissioner of Legislation and Health Related Boards. We discuss scope of practice issues and discouraged the Administration from bringing or supporting legislation that would allow for APRN/PA independent practice. We noted that it is not in the best interests of the people of Tennessee and our patients to legislate scope of practice to circumvent established educational processes and that health care in Tennessee should continue to be a physician-led team-based system. We reminded them that the education and training of advanced practice nurses and physician assistants is not equivalent to that of fully trained physicians and that it shouldn't be presented or advertised as such. At this meeting, TOMA and TMA were joined by several state specialty societies that are part of the CCC: Tennessee College of Family Physicians, Tennessee Orthopedic Society, Tennessee Dermatology Society, Tennessee Academies of Ophthalmology, and the Tennessee chapters of the American College of Surgeons, American College of Physicians, and the American College of Emergency Physicians. We were also joined by the CCC's lobbyist. CCC officers were also elected in December and I was elected Vice-Chair, so TOMA's interests will be well represented by myself, as well as Dr. Tim Bell and Betsy Hilt. We **urge** you to contact your state representative and senator about this critically important issue, encouraging them to not inappropriately expand scope of practice of nonphysicians via legislation. [Find your state legislator's contact information here.](#)

TOMA also signed on last month, with the AOA and many osteopathic state and specialty affiliate organizations, to a letter calling on CMS to withdraw its Medicare Part B Most Favored Nation (MFN) interim final rule to implement a new model for paying for high cost, separately billable part B drugs. If finalized, the MFN would be a nation-wide mandated payment program model for the 50 most costly separately billable part B drugs, which would be reimbursed at the MFN rate (lowest price paid by an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, country), adjusting for GDP, plus an add-on payment based on average sale price. Physicians would still be responsible for costs associated with purchasing, storing and administering the drugs, despite a significantly lowered payment and no mandate for suppliers or manufacturers to modify pricing. This is also worthy of a conversation with your elected officials in Washington DC – they need to hear from you on this issue. Find contact information for your [US Representative](#) and [US Senators](#).

Other developments you should be aware of from the past month:

1. TOMA has a new website with features to keep us all better connected and informed. It allows for electronic dues collection, registration and payment for CME and other events/programs. Be sure to check it out and set up your new, updated password, and if desired, update your profile.
2. The *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association* (JAOA), which began almost 120 years ago, transitions to an all-digital open access journal with a new name, the *Journal of Osteopathic Medicine* on January 1, 2021. It will be published in partnership with DeGruyter, a well-respected international independent medical publisher in Germany.
3. The AOA website also has a new online system to self-report CME activity and track/manage CME requirements for certification and licensure.
4. The National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME) will change from reporting a three-digit numeric score to reporting only "Pass" or "Fail" for COMLEX-USA Level 1 exams given after May 1, 2022, aligning with the start of the 2022-2023 testing cycle. More information will be provided in the Spring of 2021 on the details and logistics for exam candidates, COMs, and secondary users. We should be pleased that two TOMA members, Drs. Donald Polk and Brian Kessler, serve on the NBOME Board.

Two COVID vaccines have finally achieved FDA approval (and others will likely follow soon, possibly before you read this) and has been released. We should all encourage our patients and others to take these vaccines (unless medically contraindicated) and help dispel the many false rumors about the safety of vaccination. As DOs, we should also ask our patients to keep other vaccinations current (especially influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, and others, depending on specific medical situations) in order to avoid preventable disease outbreaks. I encourage you to [note recently released talking points on vaccination](#) that were sent to its members by the AOA.

TOMA continues to represent your interests well here in Tennessee and beyond. You can be very proud of the involvement of TOMA members in not only medical practice issues in our state but in many of the organizations and societies of the osteopathic profession. TOMA members are active at the highest levels, in the state, national, and regulatory community; in the ongoing development of our osteopathically distinctive licensing examination, and in countless other activities serving the health and welfare of the people of Tennessee and beyond.

Finally, TOMA's volunteer leadership and staff wish for you and your family a New Year filled with many blessings, including good health, happiness, professional success, and prosperity. We look forward to your participation in our April CME program and convention, and the ongoing TOMA Talks. We stand ready to assist you in any way we can – feel free to contact us. We will welcome your participation in our activities, committees, and governance.

Fraternally,



Michael Wieting, DO
President