

Matthew S. Ellman, MD Remarks In-Coming President
NHCMA Annual Meeting
10/20/2021

I would like to extend my own heartfelt greetings to you all. It's terrific to see many friends and colleagues, at least on video. I think I've learned how to activate the virtual parts of my brain to feel connection on the screen I never thought possible.

I want to express my gratitude to number of people for their outstanding work and dedication to the Association this past year. First, to Dr. Michael Virata for his wonderful leadership as our President. Next, many thanks to our terrific officers including Gary Desir, Elsa Stone, Maria Stack, Deborah Desir, Emily Nolfo, Brian Keyes, Kiki Kennedy, Andrea Needleman, Traci Marquis-Eydman, Faid Jadbabaie, and Steve Wolfson. Thank you to all who are on our Board of Governors. Finally, a special thanks to Jillian Wood, our superb managing director, whose creativity, positivity, and spirit of inclusion inspires our group.

I am truly honored and very excited to serve as President of the New Haven County Medical Association this coming year. I am grateful and very eager to work with all of you who will be serving on our executive and governors board this year and with all of you who I hope will become engaged in our activities. For those of you whom I've yet to get to know, just a few words about me. I'm originally from Boston and live in Madison, having been in New Haven County for the past 30 + years. I'm a primary care internist on the faculty at Yale School of Medicine. Over my career, I have practiced in a broad range of settings including private practice, community health center, and hospital system owned practice, and now academics.

COVID-19 has challenged and re-shaped our lives over these past 20 months. For me, personally, at the start of pandemic, I was immediately brought back to memories of my experiences with the AIDS pandemic. I did my medicine residency in the late 1980s at Bellevue Hospital in NYC, which had become an epicenter of AIDS. Our service was filled with young, dying patients as we were figuring out how to treat opportunistic infections and anti-retrovirals were still on the horizon. We learned to care for the dying, to cope with the fear after needle sticks, and to take care of one another. It surely took its toll. The comradery – almost warlike – and the bonds we made sustained us. At our graduation, our legendary Chair Saul Farber told us we all deserved medals of honor and that we were all true heroes.

Now in our current pandemic, tonight we are honoring 3 outstanding physicians in our community whom I consider true heroes. All have led us in remarkable ways to face the pandemic. I feel incredibly fortunate to count Drs. Nunez- Smith, Juthani, and Sosa among our community. For me, the silver lining of COVID-19 has been the opportunity to witness so many acts of heroism and kindness among colleagues and, more generally, in the medical profession. This includes all of you here this evening – from serving on the frontlines in the ICUs, the ER, and the wards to figuring out how continue care of patients through telehealth and how to keep practices afloat and staff employed; from leading public health and vaccination programs to reach our underserved communities. It takes my breath away. It makes me so grateful and proud to be a part of this community and profession.

Looking towards the year ahead, we will surely face unexpected new challenges. We will continue to do all we can to serve our community of physicians and patients, to participate in advocacy with our State Medical Society. Beyond this, I propose to focus on 3 areas during my tenure.

1. Increasing appeal to & enrollment of younger physicians.
2. Enhancing Diversity & Inclusion
3. Invigorating our NHCMA Foundation for grants & gifts.

While the AMA was founded in 1847, our County Association originated in 1784 and has represented New Haven County physicians and their patients for 237 years. To ensure another 237 years ahead, as many others have recognized and worked on, we need to increase the Association's relevance and appeal to younger membership. We have recruited some younger participants on the Board of Governors for this year, and I propose that we take a multipronged approach including some brief research, targeted programming, and outreach to graduate training programs.

In part aligned with increasing membership among younger physicians, I also propose with we focus on enhancing Diversity and Inclusion practices relevant to our organization. These will include both internal and external efforts, and should span relevant areas in our membership practices, educational programming, and community and patient advocacy.

Linked to these first two areas, I would like to grow our internal foundation for grants and gifts and formalize a process for disseminating RFPs and evaluating proposals. Many of the best of these over the years have originated from our students and trainees and have aimed to improve the care of the underserved and communities at risk. I think there is tremendous opportunity to invigorate our County Foundation.

There is much good to be done. There is much that I enthusiastically look forward to learning from you and working on together with you. In the words of one of my heroes, Mother Teresa, who I think embodied two core ingredients of medicine -- kindness and love:

"None of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful."

Thank you & good evening.