



GEORGIA OSTEOPATHIC
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
1902

GOMA News & Updates Volume 42, August 2023

GOMA Fall Conference: 16 hours of high quality & convenient CME



The [Fall Conference of the Georgia Osteopathic Medical Association](#) will be a virtual event again this year. Over the past three years, doctors have enjoyed the convenience of getting high quality CME when their work schedule allows. So, while the

conference is scheduled to be held on Friday Oct. 20, and Saturday Oct. 21, individuals will have a chance to watch the taped lectures after those dates.

The planning committee held its last planning meeting at the end of July and the confirmed lectures promise to be edifying. The GOMA conferences always have great reviews, and this year's sixteen (16) hours will also satisfy the attendees. This article will spotlight some of the speakers and agenda, and next month will feature the remainder.

William Sullivan, DO, JD will speak on *Advanced Practice Providers: Limitations and Liabilities* allowing physicians to understand the history of nurse practitioner and physician assistant practice as well as the legislative and contractual limitations imposed on advance practice providers. Of course, Dr. Sullivan will cover potential liabilities associated with supervising advance practice providers. Dr. Sullivan is an emergency physician and clinical assistant professor at Midwestern University in Illinois as well as a practicing attorney.

William “Bill” Bostock, DO will be giving an *update on the Georgia Composite Medical Board* and proceedings that practicing physicians need to be aware of. Annually, his update as a member of the Board has been enlightening for the requirements that the state of Georgia have dictated to physicians. This year's presentation will also include information about the new DEA license requirements. Of course, Dr. Bostock will warn the attendees about misbehaviors that may result in investigations into a medical practice. Dr. Bostock started as a physician assistant and then graduated from the University of Health Sciences in Kansas City before completing a residency in family medicine. After private practice in Lawrenceville, Georgia for twenty-eight years, he became the osteopathic program director for Gwinnett Medical Center's GME Program. Over the past two years, Dr. Bostock has joined Northeast Georgia Physicians Group to serve as part of the practice's core faculty, doing research, teaching and managing his practice with residents around him.

R. Sterling Haring, DO, MPH will be speaking on *chronic pain*, a subject that all physicians feel they could handle better. Dr. Haring is a pain medicine physician practicing in Tifton, Georgia who has specialized training in interventional modalities. Dr. Haring is also serving as visiting fellow at the National Academy of Medicine in Washington, DC and anticipates earning a Doctorate of Public Health. Dr. Haring has stated how his early career work as a research fellow at the Center for Healthcare Quality and Patient Safety in Switzerland and working as a injury researcher at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health have given him strong skills in communication and proficiency in health policy as well as deep understanding of US health systems.

William “Bill” Lagaly, DO will be lecturing on *wound care*. He will be updating on the most current thoughts on challenging wounds. Dr. Lagaly is a member of the executive board of GOMA and is a board certified in family medicine, hyperbaric medicine and wound care. After developing wound care centers in Little Rock, Arkansas and Buffalo, New York, he has joined the staff of Piedmont Athens Regional Wound/Hyperbaric Center in Athens, Georgia as its medical director.

Cris Mathew, DO, FAAOS, FAAHKS will be speaking on *surgical care of hip disease*. Dr. Mathew is a well-known lecturer who states, “I will always be a lifelong student and educator.” He is a fellowship trained orthopedic surgeon located in Houston, Texas and specializes in joint preservation using robotic surgery. Dr. Mathew serves on the AOA Board of Orthopedic Surgery.

John S. Kennedy, MD enjoys speaking about *parathyroid disease* which has become a specialty of his general surgical practice in Decatur, Georgia. His thirty five years in practice have earned him great praise including being named annually as one of the top physicians by Atlanta Magazine as well as honored as a national faculty member of the American College of Surgeons. Past accolades for Dr. Kennedy include being national chairman of the Quality Improvement Committee of the Commission on Cancer and President of the Georgia Surgical Society.

Matt Larsen, DO will be speaking on *Common Psychiatric Illnesses in Kids* which is an issue that has always been important, but become so much more common since the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Larsen is double board certified in adult and adolescent & child psychiatry and owns Ascend Mental Health Center in Idaho Falls, Idaho. He is chairman of the local chapter of the Suicide Prevention Action Network. He and his wife are raising four biologic children and three foster children.

Next month, we will spotlight the other speakers and their talks. In the meantime, [check out the rest of the agenda and register for the Virtual Fall Conference here](#). Register by August 31 to get the best price. **Not a Member of GOMA? Join Now!**

SPA approved by CMS Means Correction of Medicaid Reimbursement for Many DOs



At the July 13th DCH Board meeting, it was announced that they received CMS approval of the SPA to remove provider attestation. So, they should be able to move forward with adjusting rates accordingly. They did not speak to the specifics of claims adjustments.

This is in relation to an issue that dates back to 2013. At that time, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) allowed primary care physicians who provided care to Medicaid patients to be reimbursed more by using Medicare reimbursement rates if the doctor would attest that they were primary care physicians. This increase in Medicaid pay for E&M codes was extended in 2015 and continues to this day.

Unfortunately, primary care physicians who never attested to their status in 2013, had no way to correct the missed opportunity.

In 2013, doctors were able to self-attest that they were board certified in family medicine, general internal medicine, pediatric medicine and/or that 60% of all Medicaid claims for the prior year were for the E&M and vaccine codes. This attestation allowed approximately a 50% increase in reimbursement for office visits with Medicaid or Medicaid plan patients.

The Georgia Medicaid State Plan is an agreement between State and Federal governments describing how the State will administer its Medicaid program. As administrator for the Medicaid programs in Georgia, when the Department of Community Health (DCH) is planning to make a change to its program policy or operational approach, a State Plan Amendments (SPA) is sent to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for review and approval.

GOMA's representative on the Patient-Center Physicians Coalition of Georgia, Karen Turner, DO, has been a leader on correcting this bureaucratic roadblock in preventing physicians from correcting the missed opportunity. Dr. Turner was happy to hear that a breakthrough has finally been achieved.

“GOMA and PCPC have been working on behalf of the DOs in Georgia. This is a benefit of belonging to your professional organization. By joining GOMA, doctors can effect change in the state for the benefit of physicians and patients,” stated Karen Turner, DO.

It's August: Do You Know Where Your Legislators Are?



On Wednesday Aug. 30, Georgia Osteopathic Medical Association as well as the other four professional society members of the Patient-Center Physicians Coalition of Georgia will have a webinar from 12:15 to 1:15 pm. It is entitled [*It's August: Do You Know Where Your Legislators Are?*](#) -- a primer and refresher on building relationships with your state representative and state senator so when the legislative session starts in January, you will have had a head start on impacting

their decisions on health care bills. Panelists for this webinar include:

Dr. Robert L. Bowers and Others
Sen. Dr. Robert L. Bowers, a retired orthopedist, who represent the area around Marietta designated as Senate District 32 and Rep. Debbie

Buckner, a senior physician at Grady Health Department and director of the Department of Orthopedics at Grady Doctors Hospital in Columbus, who represent House District 137.

[Click here to register](#)



Congratulations to Robert L. Bowers, DO, PhD who co-authored a study on percutaneous trigger finger releases. The systemic review on percutaneous ultrasound guided A1 Pulley (trigger finger)

release can be found [here](#). The review of seventeen studies involving 749 procedures with an overall success rate of 97% with no major complications and a faster recovery compared to open release. Dr. Bowers said, “We found compelling data for one of my favorite procedures to perform ... I hope everyone finds the review helpful in legitimizing this procedure.” Dr. Bowers is a sports medicine and physiatry specialist who is practicing at Emory and is a faculty member of the orthopedics department.

Student Loans is the Subject at Home and in Washington D.C.



Donald Taylor, DO, an anesthesiologist from Marietta, GA and now practicing in Huntsville, AL, pronounced on his Facebook page last month that he had just completed paying off his student loans. (See interview with him below) The timing was notable since after three years, the pandemic-era freeze on student loan payments will end in late September.

At the end of June, the Supreme Court ruled the Biden administration overstepped its authority in trying to cancel or reduce student load debt, effectively killing a \$400 billion plan. Barring an act of Congress, 43 million people are on the hook for payments starting in October. In mid-July, the Department of Education announced the cancellation of \$39 billion in debt for over 800,000 borrowers who have been in repayment for 20 to 25 years. Under the proposed approach, the White House is now planning to use the Higher Education Act of 1965 – a sweeping federal law that governs the student loan program – to bring about relief for student borrowers. Borrowers who sign up or are already

signed up for the current Revised Pay as You Earn (REPAYE) plan will be automatically enrolled in SAVE once the new plan is implemented. All student borrowers in repayment will be eligible to enroll in the SAVE plan. Federal officials said borrowers will be able to apply for the SAVE plan later this summer.

But just like Biden's attempt to use the 2003 HEROES Act to justify forgiving loans, Biden's second cancellation plan could take a long time to come to fruition and it's almost certain to face legal challenges.

The recent setbacks have created a slew of articles advising borrowers. Firstly, it has been noted that interest will start accruing September 1. Deferment or forbearance are options if you're in a short-term financial bind which would allow you to temporarily suspend payments even though interest still accrues. Default is rarely a good choice and bankruptcy should be an option of last resort.

If you have worked for a government agency or a non-profit organization, you could be eligible for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which forgives student debt after 10 years of regular payments.

If you were behind or delinquent before March 2020, the Biden administration's Fresh Start program will allow those accounts to be considered current and borrowers will have the option to enroll in income-driven repayment plans.

Experts recommend borrowers use the loan-simulator tool at StudentAid.gov or the one on the TISLA's website to find a payment plans that best fits their needs. The calculators tell you what your monthly payment would be under each available plan, as well as your long-term costs.

One can reduce costs when paying off student loans by signing up for automatic payments, the servicer takes a quarter of a percent off your interest rate.

For osteopathic medical students in the state of Georgia, PCOM's website has plenty of information regarding loans, scholarships,

and grants as well the ability to schedule a meeting with a financial aid counselor. Click [here](#) for details.

Also, of note, are the changes in the Georgia budget that was implemented July 1st. Changes include \$2.25 million in increases for loan repayments for physicians, PAs and NPs that practice in rural areas. There also \$1.95 million increase for funding to federally qualified health centers and charity clinics across Georgia. And for the young doctors who are starting their postgraduate careers, Georgia has added \$6.6 million to support new residency slots, fellowships and hospitals expanding GME.

Donald Taylor, DO Teaches About Becoming Debt Free (and Curling)



Donald Taylor, DO was practicing in Georgia before moving his practice to Alabama, and he is a GOMA Facebook friend. So, when he pronounced on Facebook that he had just paid off all of his student loans, it caught the attention of this newsletter. Dr. Taylor graduated with his D.O. degree from A.T. Still University-Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2014, and did an anesthesiology residency at St. Louis University.

Tell about your practice?

I am currently a practicing anesthesiologist employed by Northstar Anesthesia at Crestwood Medical Center in Huntsville, AL. I supervise and personally perform anesthesia for most surgical specialties and obstetrics. Administratively, I serve as our group's physician scheduler. My first job out of residency was in Columbus, GA serving at Piedmont Columbus Regional Medical Center, Northside, and Jack Hughston hospitals. During the pandemic, we chose to move to Huntsville where my wife's family is located. I still go back to Columbus on occasion to help my anesthesia colleagues there.

Family life?

I am married to my wife of 8 years, Jessica, whom I met during my clinical years of medical school in St. Louis, MO. We have a 5 year old daughter, Clara, who was born during my last year of residency training in St. Louis. Jessica's family is in Huntsville, so Clara gets to spend lots of time with her grandmother, "Shayshay". We also travel back to Marietta, GA (my home town) frequently, to see my parents, Nana and Granddad.

Hobbies? Passions?

When I'm not at the hospital, I enjoy spending time with my family, traveling and curling. We just recently returned from Jamaica where we visited my sister Erin (brunette in picture above with Dr. Taylor and his family) in Kingston who works for USAID out of the U.S. Embassy to support the development of democracy through programs aimed at reducing gang violence. As for curling, I began after the U.S. men's team won gold in the 2018 Olympic Games, while still in residency. After moving to a city with a curling club, I took the opportunity to get back into the sport. I currently am the skip (team captain) for our club team, the Spin Doctors. We have enjoyed getting to play in bonspiels (tournaments) in Huntsville and Marietta and look forward to spreading our wings further!

The loans that you recently paid off were they from undergraduate or medical school?

The loans I recently payed off were largely from medical school. I was sure that I wanted to enter private practice after residency, so I refinanced over \$250,000 from government loans to private with Laurel Road during my last year of residency. At the time they offered a deal that required very minimal monthly payments until graduation, which was helpful for my family while I was in residency with a newborn child. Once I had some income under my belt as an attending, I refinanced again with SoFi to get a lower interest rate. I refinanced a third time after the pandemic when interest rates were very low, ultimately dropping my interest rates from 6.8% government loans to about 2% with Earnest. As soon as I had an attending paycheck, my wife and I made it our priority to pay off our student loans quickly, so we chose a 5 year repayment plan and kept the payments the same as we refinanced in the hopes of paying it off sooner if possible.

What is your opinion about the most recent proposal to help individual debtors that have a history of making payments for over ten years, but still have less than \$10,000 left to pay, and the government paying off the last amount?

I was unaware of this particular proposal. Since I refinanced early, I assumed that any government based loan forgiveness would not apply to me since I no longer had government-owned student loans. Thus I didn't pay much attention to it. Honestly it would have been nice to have \$10,000 knocked off my student loan repayment; although it might be more helpful for the government to lower their interest rates to better match the significantly lower rates available from private lenders. Knocking off \$10,000 is akin to treating a symptom instead of curing the disease. My cynical side can't help but think this is a kind of handout designed to buy votes.

For individuals that are in the middle of educating themselves, what advise do you have about taking on student debt?

Take on as little as necessary. I absolutely loved the education I received from KCOM- but it was not cheap. If you have the option to attend a public institution for significantly less, consider it seriously.

Don't enter forbearance in residency. Paying anything, even though it may not even cover your interest, with a form of income-based repayment is better than doing nothing. Remember that payments in most residency programs will count towards the 10 year public service loan forgiveness.

For the individual that is starting their career in medicine, what advice do you have about handling student debt?

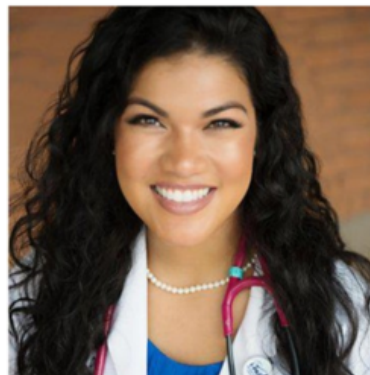
The advice to "live like a resident" is a great sound bite- but almost impossible to conform to with a family. As much as you may want to prioritize hammering out those student loans, your home-life will often have unanticipated demands. You're going to have some life-style creep. That's okay. Just keep it modest. We went on some nice vacations before I had my loans payed off (pro tip: don't bring

Atlanta Magazine Spotlights Twenty Seven DOs

when it came time to buy a new car, we shopped used, non-luxury cars. We felt like we were in the most comfortable position in Georgia we could be in. Atlanta Magazine's July salary feature posted the top 25 DOs in the state. We were ranked 10th. Congratulations to the other DOs for being recognized! that we essentially already had a mortgage-level payment each month in the form of our student loans.



Dr. Ilyas



Dr. Jones-Park



Dr. White

Next month, we will be back down to focus on achieving some of our other financial goals.
PEDIATRICS: **Yasamin Alwan Ilyas, DO** of Children's at Forsyth Urgent Care Center located at 410 Peachtree Parkway, Ste 320, Cumming, GA 30041
Congratulations and Thank you, Dr. Taylor!

FAMILY PRACTICE: **Barbara Joy Jones-Parks, DO** of The Healthy Woman located at 2860 Main Street West, Snellville, GA 30078. A Physician Profile advertisement about her practice is located on page 181.

FAMILY PRACTICE: **Candace C. White, DO** of Emory at Miller Grove, Primary Care located at 2745 DeKalb Medical Parkway; Ste 110; Lithonia, GA 30058 describes her practice, "I specialize in treating the whole person, while acknowledging that the mind, body and spirit are all connected. Patients feel heard and experience quality care each visit."



Dr. Macklin



Dr. Williams



Dr. Levine

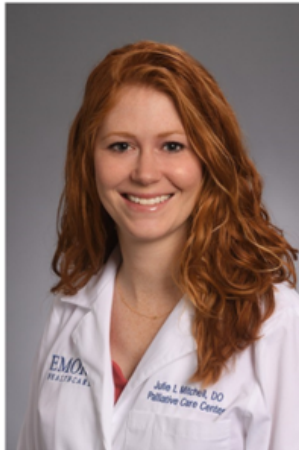
FAMILY PRACTICE: **Leah Macklin, DO** of the Family Practice Center, PC located at 2860 Ronald Reagan Blvd, Suite 200, Cumming, GA 30041 describes her practice, "Same-day visits, lifestyle medicine, nutrition, weight loss, women's health, skin procedures, joint injections, Medicare accepted, accepting new patients, highly rated, patient focused, certified lifestyle medicine, in-house X-ray, phlebotomy". Dr. Macklin is featured in a profile on page 76.

VASCULAR & INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGY: **Roger Williams, DO** of Quantum Radiology located at 790 Church Street, Suite 400, Marietta, GA 30060 serves multiple WellStar Hospitals.

ORTHOPEDICS: Mathew Levine, DO of Resurgens Orthopaedics located at 4150 Deputy Bill Cantrell Memorial Rd, Suite 300, Cumming, GA 30040. His practice is described, "Dr. Levine specializes in hip, knee, and joint replacements. Dr. Levine's area of expertise are reconstructive surgery of the hip and knee, anterior approach total hip replacement, robotic total and partial knee replacement/MAKOplasty, and outpatient hip and knee replacements."



Dr. Cleaver



Dr. Mitchell



Dr. Ross

DERMATOLOGY: Nathan J. Cleaver, DO of Cleaver Medical Group Dermatology located at 105 Professional Park Drive, Cumming, GA 30040. His practice is described: "Our fellowship-training and board certified dermatologists provide comprehensive patient-centered skin care center for the whole family."

HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE MEDICINE: Julie Lauren Mitchell, DO of Emory Palliative and Supportive Care located at 550 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30308 provides care at Emory Midtown, Emory University and Emory Johns Creek.

GENERAL SURGERY: Ashleigh Gunn Ross, DO of DeKalb Surgical Associates, PC located at 2665 North Decatur Road, Suite 730, Decatur, GA 30033 highlights about her practice: "ALIF exposure, robotic surgery, patient ratings"



Dr. Mannino



Dr. Chawla

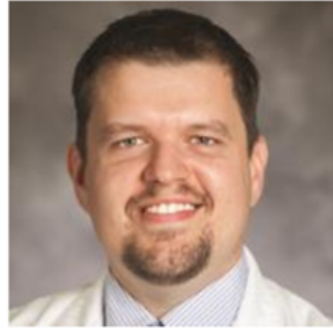


Dr. Valvani

INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGY: Salvatore F. Mannino, DO of Wellstar Cardiovascular Medicine located at 55 Witcher Street NE, Suite 350, Marietta, GA 30060 describes his practice, "Expertise in complex high-risk coronary intervention especially nonsurgical candidates and those requiring mechanical circulatory support."

NEPHROLOGY: Divya Chawla, DO of Nephrology Consultants of Georgia located at 275 Collier Road NW, Suite 290, Atlanta, GA 30309.

PHYSICAL MEDICINE & REHABILITATION: Rajeev Kumar Valvani, DO of Pinnacle Orthopaedics located at 300 Tower Road, Suite 200, Marietta, GA 30060. His physician profile advertisement on page 205 states that he specializes in non-operative treatment of the spine and sports-related musculoskeletal injuries. He performs procedures including: epidurals, facet joints, medial branch blocks, radiofrequency ablation and joint injections.



Dr. Kelley



Dr. Khan

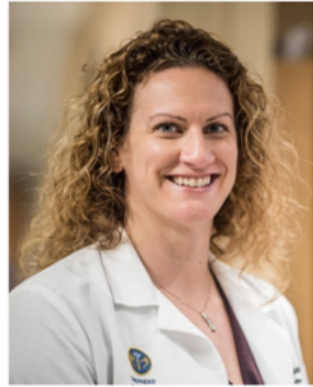


Dr. Tsagaris

UROGYNECOLOGY/FEMALE PELVIC RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY: **Robert Stanislaw Kelley, DO** of Emory Clinic located at 1365 Clifton Road NE, Bldg A, Floor 4, Atlanta, GA 30322

RHEUMATOLOGY: **Omar T. Khan, DO** of the Arthritis & Rheumatology Center, PC located at 102 Mary Alice Park Road, Suite 805, Cumming, GA 30040 is on staff at multiple hospital systems.

RHEUMATOLOGY: **Katina Christina Tsagaris, DO** of the Emory Clinic located at 1365 Clifton Road NE, Bldg A, Floor 3, Atlanta, GA 30322 stays busy being "Rheumatology Clinic medical director, co-director of the Scleroderma Specialty clinic. Emory Rheumatology medical director."



Dr. Beninga



Dr. Keitt



Dr. Moore

PHYSICAL MEDICINE & REHABILITATION: Angela Beninga, DO of Shepherd Center located at 2020 Peachtree Road NW, Atlanta, GA 30309 specializing in spinal trauma cases

SPORTS MEDICINE: Frazier L. Keitt, DO of Grady Memorial Hospital Orthopedics Center located at 80 Gilmer Street SE, Correll Pavilion, Atlanta, GA 30303. Her practiced is described: “Services all people from all communities, no matter their insurance status. Sports medicine for the community, ensuring we provide the best for acute and chronic MSK complaint. Only system within the metro area that services all comers – from the homeless to the insured – while still offering services, i.e. biologic injections and platelet rich plasma.” A physician profile advertisement is located on page 176.

UROGYNECOLOGY/FEMALE PELVIC RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY: Robert D. Moore, DO of Miklos & Moore Urogynecology located at 11975 Morris Road, Suite 140, Alpharetta, GA 30005



Dr. Briones



Dr. Mathew



Dr. Tarquinio

PEDIATRIC HEMATOLOGY & ONCOLOGY: Michael A. Briones, DO of the Aflac Cancer and Blood Disorder Center located at 1405 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30322

PAIN MEDICINE: Jose Mathew, DO of Summit Spine & Joint Centers located at 455 Philip Boulevard, Bldg 100, Suite 140, Lawrenceville, GA 30046 describes his practice: “Specialize in unique and the most cutting edge minimally invasive spine and joint treatments.”

PEDIATRIC NEUROLOGY: Daniel C. Tarquinio, DO of the Center for Rare Neurologic Diseases located at 5600 Oakbrook Parkway, Suite 120, Norcross, GA 30093



Dr. Neufeld



Dr. Shaw



Dr. Solomon

PAIN MEDICINE: Nathan J. Neufeld, DO of City of Hope Atlanta located at 600 Celebrate Life Parkway, Newnan, Ga 30265 specializes in cancer pain medicine.

PAIN MEDICINE: Erik Shaw, DO of Shepherd Center located at 2020 Peachtree Road NW, Atlanta, GA 30309 specializes in pain of patients who had spinal cord injury.

PAIN MEDICINE: Eric D. Solomon, DO of Pain Relief Clinic located at 1395 South Marietta Parkway, Bldg 100, Suite 102, Marietta, GA 30067



Dr. Salmieri



Dr. Poline



Dr. Kunjummen

July CPR Class at Mall of Georgia Taught by PCOM GA Students



On July 12 at the Mall of Georgia in Buford, PCOM Georgia osteopathic students educated the public on CPR. The students enjoyed the interactions, and the shoppers learned how to save a life.

“We were enchanted to learn that some of TSwift’s songs

(Enchanted and Sparks Fly, TV, obviously) have the right tempo for Congratulations to Tyler Key (OMS-2, DO '26) of PCOM South Georgia who received a Hospital Authority Scholarship during the annual Colquitt Regional Medical Center Foundation Scholarship Luncheon. On May 17, Colquitt Regional was proud to honor 26 participating in the annual National Two Step CPR event for the recipients of its healthcare scholarships at the seventh annual Colquitt Regional Medical Foundation Scholarship Luncheon. For the third year, the Hospital Authority awarded a scholarship to a PCOM Georgia Emergency Medicine native of South Georgia, the Tyler Key's who is entering his second year at the PCOM South Georgia campus, received the \$5000 award. [Read about the highlights of the program here.](#)

community on how to perform hands (compressions) only CPR. During five-minute training sessions, participants learn how to act quickly during cardiac emergencies by calling 911 and by pushing hard and fast in the center of the chest until help arrives.

PCOM South Georgia Students Travel to Cambodia



A group of seven PCOM South Georgia doctor of osteopathic medicine students have returned after serving on a two-week medical mission trip in Cambodia.

Seven students, from the PCOM South Georgia Class of 2026, traveled on the international trip including Krupesh G. Patel, of Valdosta; Tiffany Pittman, of Stockbridge; Grace Perry, of Hahira; Pathya Kunthy, of Conyers, Ga. and Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Emma High, of Saint Simons Island; Alexander Studebaker of Conyers and Tyler Key of Moultrie. Studebaker's wife, Molly Studebaker, herself a University of Georgia PharmD program student, also traveled with the group.

The students were searching for a medical mission trip program to attend for the summer, but when they failed to find one to meet their limited scheduling, they decided to organize their own. The students had just completed their first year of studies at the PCOM

South Georgia campus and were hoping to gain first-hand experience with rural medicine.

Kunthy suggested the group travel to Cambodia, so his parents, who are also doctors, could assist with finding hospitals they could tour and shadow local staff.

The students participated in medical internships in three hospitals including Khmer-Society Friendship Hospital, a public hospital that was built in the 1960s; Cambodia-China Friendship Preah Kossamak Hospital, a more recently opened public hospital; and a private hospital that opened in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

“It was a good rural experience. Given that we're here at PCOM South Georgia, we're here to study rural medicine and be a part of rural medicine. I thought it'd be a good idea to explore Cambodia as a rural country, and then also from a public health perspective to see what healthcare is like,” Kunthy said in an interview July 17.

Attending the trip gave the group a newfound appreciation of what South Georgia's rural healthcare system provides.

Kunthy said what local community members think is inadequate in rural South Georgia is generally more than what Cambodia's healthcare system has. Although Cambodia might lack available resources, they're able to provide care and complete procedures without all the technology and equipment.

Another important aspect of the trip was to view multiple areas of the country in addition to the hospital tours. While driving through one town, the students viewed a local merchant care facility that also served as the nearest hospital on a remote island.

It really gave a feel for how people live and what their access to healthcare is, High said.

The students saw immediate differences in Cambodia's healthcare system at the facilities.

“Seeing the passion for medicine was really unique. Every physician we talked to or even P.K's aunt who's a midwife, were so excited that we were there and to share their hospital and their

experience with us. You could feel how excited and passionate the people were to have us there to talk about their facility and to tell us the cool unique things that they were doing with limited resources. So to be able to see that excitement, which I feel like is frequently lost in U.S. healthcare, was unique,” High explained.

Patel noticed that many of the resources like personal protective equipment (PPE), masks, scrubs and medical shoe covers are disposable in the United States healthcare field. In countries like Cambodia, they have to repeatedly clean, sterilize and reuse those resources.

Pittman agreed.

“One thing I took away is how much they’re able to adapt. That's really what medicine is about. You're adapting to everything that's changing consistently,” she said.

The patients' rooms in the older public hospital were accessible from the exterior of the hospital. It was common for multiple patients, up to four or six, to be stationed to a single room without any privacy curtains, and air-conditioning was only available by request or in “VIP” rooms.

The students were also able to view several surgical procedures and health facilities.

As expected, there were some language barriers. The medical terms in the United States are mainly Latin based while the medical terms in Cambodia are French based. Some of the facilities continue to record patients' charts in a paper system.

They noticed that specialty buildings where payment was required at time of service were more updated while buildings that were publicly funded were outdated. Some areas within the facilities even displayed the cost of each medical service on large boards.

While viewing a Caesarian section at a rural hospital, a doctor noted that they did not have a cautery, which is a medical instrument used to reduce or stop bleeding during surgery.

“[The doctor] said, so you just make do what you have. He changed and adapted his surgical techniques for the best prognosis

for the patient and the child with the limited resources,” Kunthy explained.

Being able to speak and learn from different physicians on the international trip is already benefiting the students as they enter their second year of studies. The students are studying general anesthesia upon returning to Moultrie and were able to apply what they learned in class to their previous shadowing experience with a patient.

The students hope to make this as a permanent travel option at the PCOM South Georgia campus.

In Other Words

Read story [here](#).

"As I walked out the door to my freedom, I knew that if I did not leave all the anger, hatred, and bitterness behind that I would still be in prison." – Nelson Mandela