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Inaugural Speech, 228th President
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Back in February, Larry Downs, our CEO, my girlfriend Denise and I met with the event planner to figure out how we're going to manage the MSNJ annual meeting and the celebration of my inauguration. At that time, I thought about what I was going to say during this inauguration speech. Well as we all know, the events of the world have changed drastically since February. Medicine has changed drastically since February. It's a whole new world; we need to come to grips with that. First of all, I have to say thank you to Dr. Marc Levine, our past- president and to Larry Downs, the CEO of the Medical Society of New Jersey, as well the board members and the staff of the Medical Society. This has been a tumultuous year. Most of us cannot even fathom how hard they have worked through this Covid- Fiasco. Pandemic

Between dealing with the State of New Jersey and personal protective equipment and respirators, their work was never ending.

It is going to be very hard to try to fill Marc Levine's shoes in this position as president of this great Medical Society. As you know the Medical Society of New Jersey is the oldest Medical Society in the United States, founded in 1766 in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Times are changing. Medicine has changed. What used to be a profession of solo practitioners has turned into a profession of large group practices, hospital-based Physicians, and telemedicine doctors. You can't turn on the television set without seeing commercials for medications that you must tell your doctor that you need a prescription for. It's a very, very difficult time out there but we have to do it. This is our profession. We must never concede our role as Leaders of organized medicine.

We must [bring] preserve medicine [back to] as an honorable profession. In order to do that, I implore you that we all must work together to make this happen. We have seen at our board meetings that we are now having great enthusiasm from the medical student section of the Medical Society. During COVID 19 our medical students have stepped up by creating face masks, volunteering as contact tracers and engaging fully in the COVID response. These are the future leaders of medicine. We can do this and we can do it together. We have to.

I could not continue this inaugural speech without thanking my children Eric and Andrew for putting up with me during my time away from them during my work as an OB/GYN and my attendance at countless meetings. I have to thank Denise who has put up with me as well. And of course, I wouldn't be here today without the urging and support of Irene Kapsaskis, the Executive Director of The Union County Medical Society.

Besides bringing back medicine to a time-honored profession, I have some goals for this year that I would like to share with you and I ask all the members of the Medical Society for their support.

We need to work on our position regarding marijuana-- medical use and/ or social use. This is a question that has come up to the Policy and Strategy Panel and the Board and we need to continue our discussions with this topic. MSNJ has a CME learning module on the science of

medical marijuana. It is likely that adult use marijuana will become legal in NJ. We must know how both medical and adult use marijuana will interact with other prescription medications. MSNJ is leading the way so our members are informed about how marijuana impacts multiple systems within the body.

We need to help with Medicaid in reforming their payments. NJ is among the lowest paying Medicaid programs in the nation. MSNJ has engaged with the Department of Human Services to create innovation within the program through reducing unnecessary prior authorizations and other factors impacting patient care.

We need to work with new membership for MSNJ with large groups as well as hospital-based Physicians. We've been doing a good job with large groups but as times have changed, we need to convince hospital-based Physicians that we as organized medicine can help them as well.

We want to continue our work with the insurance denial registry. Our registry is up and ready, but the impact of COVID has delayed our launch. MSNJ has used the registries structure to allow reporting of price gouging and counterfeit PPE for reporting to the Attorney General.

We want to continue our work with connecting practices with information technology through One-Health of New Jersey which is led by Dr. Kennedy Ganti. Physicians must be able to share patient information with each other as we care for shared patients. As an OB GYN it is important for me to be able to share information on my patients with their primary care physician and vice versa. OneHealth NJ lets us connect even though we might use different EMR systems. There is grant funding available to our physicians to connect to OneHealthNJ.

We want to continue work with MSNJ Insurance Agency through the Medical Society to expand the members' Health Plan which is a self-funded plan. The MSNJ member's health plan is a member benefit you should consider for your practice. We have dedicated staff that can get you great pricing and terms on health insurance, workers comp policies, medical malpractice policies and more.

Now that we're getting back to the real world, we want to work with the legislature with reducing the burden for prior authorization and we want to work on making sure that the issue of out-of-network payments for Physicians is under control. The staff will be monitoring the implementation of the law and how physicians are being paid. We will regularly report to the legislature if problems or unfairness arises.

We want to work on making sure the team-based care with doctors and nurses are working together. MSNJ believes patients do best under the care of a physician led team. We support policies that encourage team based care and oppose those that create silos. To that end we are advancing legislation that requires transparency for patients about who is providing their care. Physicians, nurses, assistants, and aides will need to identify their credentials and training when seeing patients.

Something that we wanted to bring up at the annual meeting is a CME program on Physician Burnout. This has to be addressed and Physicians need to know what it is and what telling signs to be aware of. As our lives begin to move away from crisis standards of care, we will continue our work with partners focused on reducing the underlying causes of physician burnout. We have

partnered with the AMA and three other state medical societies to study the impact of workflow changes in practice settings that contribute to or mitigate physician burnout. As we find ways to re connect in the fall we will make physician wellness a focus of our activities.

Another thing that I want to include in our work for this year is something that was brought up in our specialty meetings. We want to talk about truth in advertising.

We want to work with the AMA and with the government regarding drug pricing and surprise billing legislation. These will be ongoing federal issues we will support the AMA in accomplishing. Our outstanding AMA delegation will be engaged on these issues.

Now, I brought up a lot of points that I want to address during the coming year and I hope that we can do as much as possible. The Board cannot do this alone. The MSNJ staff cannot do this alone. We need help from everyone. We will be reaching out to our members and our counties to help with these endeavors.

Again, thank you for your electing me as President of this Great Medical Society.