

Welcome 2021!

As incoming president of the Community Oncology Alliance, I would like to thank all my fellow board members, executive committee members, and all the hard-working, dedicated employees and family members for everything they have done these past years to make sure oncologists can continue giving their patients the best standard of care nationwide. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincerest gratitude for the trust and faith you have shown in electing me as COA President. I want to thank all the past presidents, some of whom I had the privilege of knowing and working with, Mike Diaz, Jeff Vacirca, Bruce Gould, Dave Eagle, Mark Thompson, Fred Schnell, Mark (Harry) Barnes, and countless other leaders including Barbara McAneny, Lucio, Jeff (the other Jeff, Patton), Lalan (and many others whose names I may have forgotten to mention) who at the drop of the hat left everything they were doing and rushed to reflect the voice of preserving care for till-then voiceless cancer patients. Of course, I would like to ensure that my coach T alias Ted Okon gets due recognition for all his passion and contribution for the hard work and a vision to keep community oncology alliance thriving. I want to make sure that I also recognize our legislative partners' team with Jeff Mortier and Sarah Walters from Farragut Partners.

Today I stand tall not because of the height of my own accomplishments, but because of the contributions of my predecessors. As Sir Isaac Newton said in 1675, if I have seen further, it is by standing on the **shoulders of the Giants I mentioned before.**

The mission of COA is above and beyond all of us. We represent the voice of the voiceless and serve as the megaphone for all cancer patients, especially the marginalized, underprivileged, and underrepresented minorities. COA members and community cancer clinics have always been at the forefront of preserving cancer care in places where few health systems choose to serve.

As a first-generation immigrant from India, the COA family adopted me, recognized me, and gave me a chance to lead. Not only I but the COA board chose to have complete diversity in leadership, including Vice President Dr. Miriam Atkins, a female medical oncologist of African American origin, and Secretary Dr. Debra Patt, a Jewish American Medical Oncologist. We have made COA a truly diverse leadership chosen by a predominant mainstream association. COA will stand by its commitment to representing all.

During my tenure as President of COA, I will endeavor to address racial disparities in all aspects of cancer services, including precision medicine and the value based care. I will endeavor to be a servant leader. I neither claim nor believe myself to be perfect, but I will do everything possible to let all voices be heard and mobilize all the resources available to preserve cancer care to belong to the providers who see and treat patients every day.

I want to ensure that for the next two years, I will lead our team to preserve COA's foundations.

Our goal is to provide affordable access to care closer to home for all patients with full transparency. My passion for this ideology stems from two principles. One is the founding theme from COA and second from my own formative years of life.

I grew up with a father who was orphaned as a child. He endured an unimaginable struggle through grinding poverty. Despite every challenge life threw at him, he not only educated and built a career for himself, but also ensured that his children would receive the best education. When he passed, he had his body donated to the medical school where I studied to return the obligation, he felt of gratitude for giving me the education that allowed me to reach where I have.

When I was still a child, he used to take me on a small two-wheeler to the Gandhi Ashram, the hermitage where Mahatma Gandhi lived for most of his life. I didn't understand the visits then, and often found myself bored. But as I've grown older, I remember two important quotes from my time there.

The first was "We are the trustees and stewards of life and not the users. Remember this and make this universe a better place than what we inherited. Then you will fulfil mission of your life"

My role both as a physician and as COA President is to carefully spend the public funding from the Medicare trust fund and other payers to ensure that we will do everything to provide care in an affordable setting, closer to home and at a less expensive site of care, to preserve and nurture care for future generations.

The second that comes to mind is "Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man you have seen, and ask yourself if this step you contemplate is going to be any use to him.", and "A nation's greatness is measured **by** how it treats its weakest members."

I will ensure that I will remember the face of uninsured cancer patients, no matter what race, religion, creed, or ethnicity they belong to, and will stand as their advocate. As a first-generation Indian American immigrant, the great nation of the United States has given me so much love, care and respect. If I can return a fraction of this, I will consider my goals accomplished. I feel honored and privileged when I am on the prayer list of over 20 churches to safeguard my health and wellness when I travel overseas. Having lived in three continents, the only country (in addition to my home country) that has granted me this kind of love is the US.

When Columbus sailed on his sailing expedition, his first days' diaries read

*What shall we do when hope is gone?*

*THE WORDS LEAPT LIKE A LEAPING SWORD! SAIL ON! SAIL ON! SAIL ON! AND ON!*

We shall continue to sail on!

Thank you all, and Happy New Year.

From the bottom of my heart,

Kashyap Patel, MD

[www.betweenlifeanddeath.org](http://www.betweenlifeanddeath.org)

[www.ccorn.net](http://www.ccorn.net)

[www.cbcca.net](http://www.cbcca.net)

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