2021 CAPA Presidential Address

In this period of great uncertainty, transitions, and challenges like never before, it is both an honor and a privilege to serve as the 2021 CAPA President. With 2020 behind us, I look forward to more stability and growth as an organization in the year to come. Despite, the many hurdles of 2020, I would like to thank our organization leaders including last year’s Chairman of the Board Katie Wenstrom and Past President Eric Liu, as well as the entire executive board and officers who stepped up to the challenge and adapted to ensure we could still safely come together as a group. An extra special thanks to Curtis Smith, who introduced us all to the capabilities of zoom and Amber Schalk who kept us informed through the CAPA Connection newsletter. To those continuing their terms as well as new officers or board members, your willingness to serve is very much appreciated and I look forward to working with you to achieve our goals over the coming year.

As incoming President, I have identified three main goals for 2021 which include connecting and engaging members, increasing sponsorship and fundraising efforts, and highlighting pharmacy’s critical contributions to the healthcare community.

While the pandemic has created many new challenges, it has also provided several opportunities. We have found new ways to stay connected and accomplish our goals. My hope is that we can continue to find new and innovative methods to meet our member’s needs, but I am also hopeful that we can get back to our roots and provide in-person engagement before years end. Just as we are well aware of many different types of learners and the benefits of accommodating to different learning styles, I hope we can gleam a better understanding of member’s needs and be able to provide different mediums to meet these needs. A focus on membership needs aims to pave the way to retain members, increase member participation and engagement, and to appeal to new members. Everyone can play a crucial role in this goal by talking to peers and sharing your experiences, getting involved in whatever capacity you are able, and encouraging others to be involved.

The pandemic has had major constraints on our ability to meet in-person and with this we have seen a sharp decline in sponsorship funding. As we enter 2021, I hope to find new ways to engage sponsors regardless of the format in which we may be required to meet. In addition, I am also focused on organizing fundraising efforts to supplement both our community service efforts as well as funding our student scholarships.

While the pandemic has had a vast number of negative outcomes, it is important to realize and appreciate the positive outcomes, such as highlighting the essential role of pharmacists, technicians, and students. Pharmacies and pharmacy workers have played a vital role during the pandemic in both the community and hospital settings. This includes providing prescriptions and caring for patients with chronic diseases, working side by side with physicians to provide pharmaceutical care for patients, ordering and administering COVID-19 tests, and administering vaccines. There is no time like the present to encourage and support our members as professionals responsible for the delivery of patient-focused care and to advance our profession.

The challenges of 2020 have left many individuals with feelings of loss and a lack of control. While all were touched by burdens, the extent of these burdens and the impact of these on everyday life vary greatly. There is no better time to look toward the future and the year ahead is packed full of opportunities. I look forward to the new challenges and changes that await us as we work together to achieve our common goals and continue to be a voice for area pharmacists and patients that we serve. On a final note, I encourage each and every one of you to take back some control, get involved, and try something new in 2021.

Heather Schalk, PharmD, BCPS

2021 CAPA President