

Message From APPNA President, 2017
Sajid Chaudhary, MD

Dear APPNA Family, Greetings! It gives me immense pleasure to welcome APPNA members and their families at annual convention in my hometown. We are celebrating 40th year of APPNA. It is the time to rejoice and celebrate the 40 years of APPNA volunteers and members who have committed their time and energy for the progress of our great organization. The Convention will highlight the wonderful accomplishments of last 40 years and will promise new beginnings.

The dynamics of the world and local politics is changing rapidly and it is affecting our societies as well. The changing times urge us to adjust our focus as well. Our priorities need to accommodate the demand of the day and redirect our attention to our local communities and re-introduce ourselves as people of peace and compassion to our neighbours. We need to build a legacy in our adopted homeland which will enable us and our children to live with pride and confidence. APPNA provides us with a wonderful platform to initiate and carry out such efforts. In keeping with the theme of this year "Civic Engagement Through Community service" our work has begun in the form of community projects throughout USA through provision of healthcare services by free clinics, medical mission and food pantry program. More programs are being added as we hope to foster a sense of brotherhood among fellow citizens. This year may be unique in the way of acquiring sponsorship and collaboration with organizations which are inspired with APPNA's charitable accomplishments and will provide monetary support to our projects. This is how APPNA was able to start the Food Pantry program with \$25000 of matching grant to component societies who are undertaking this program in 5 states. I am proud of Drs. Habib Chotani and Rehan Khan who are spearheading this project, under the leadership of Dr. Babar Cheema; chair of Civic Engagement committee.

Similarly, Social Welfare Committee has started 2 new wonderful projects this year. The Cleft lip-palate Repair project and Corneal transplant project. Both of these projects underscore the dire need of healthcare services in Pakistan. To date 16 cleft Lip surgeries were performed in Faisalabad while 2 are planned in Quetta. The corneal transplants are being done in Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad and Peshawar and 38,000 dollars have been raised so far. To date, 112 corneas have been successfully transplanted in patients in Pakistan. Each cornea costs around 200. It is heartening to see the contributions made by APPNA members and selfless work of SWDRC volunteers resulting in gift of a beautiful smile and precious vision to the indigent in Pakistan. I congratulate Dr. Shahid Shaikh and his wonderful team on a job well done.

APPNA MERIT committee is making waves through its neurology and psychiatry education initiatives in Pakistan. The Child Psychiatry certification for adult psychiatrist in Pakistan will start on line in July. It will become a specialty-focused partnership between educators in US and Pakistan to enhance medical education and health care in Pakistan in next decade. MERIT hopes to add more specialties in future. I commend Chair, Dr. Shahid Rafique and his co chair, Waqar Azeem for their hard work.

This year has been hard for young doctors from Pakistan due to 28 J-1 denials. Heart wrenching news met with unrelenting efforts of the Young physicians and Advocacy committees who have been working tirelessly to assist those young physicians. The Day on the Hill, Meeting with The State Department officials, Petition to the Secretary of State, obtaining legal help, highlighting the issue in the Media, contacts with US and Pakistani Ambassadors were some of the means that APPNA employed to rectify the refusals. Drs. Piracha and Shahzad Iqbal and their teams will continue their efforts until all physicians get their visa and, they have my complete support. I urge APPNA members to keep themselves informed and reach out to their legislators to advocate on behalf of the visa applicants. Together we can move the proverbial mountain and help the young physicians whose careers are online.

Often I am asked as to why APPNA spends a lot of money on events and entertainment why not just

donate money to the poor. I tell them that it is not as simple as that. Fact is that APPNA relies on the membership dues and revenues generated from its meetings to run the central office as well as conduct its charitable projects. Of course members donate but there are many projects which require additional funding. Our meetings attract a large number of people due to the entertainment programs and generate significant revenue which helps the organization financially. Just to give you an example, the sale of "preferred seats at Friday entertainment" this year will give us \$25000 plus to fund our food pantry program.

I would also like to thank Dr. Aniq Shaikh and all the members of the host committee for their relentless hard work of past 6 months in putting together the summer convention. They have been a model of harmony and collaboration which is a rare find.

I thank you for your support and any suggestions from you are always appreciated. I am looking forward to working with you throughout this year and in the years ahead.