

Dear APPNA members,

Assalam-alaikum

It has been indeed a privilege serving as the secretary of APPNA for 2017.

At the outset of the year a fruitful meeting was conducted on strategic planning in Orlando. Under the guidance of professional moderators, a spirited discussion was conducted among the participants to review the organization's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, a productive council meeting was held in Philadelphia in March. This was followed by summer council and General body meeting in Orlando in July. The Executive Committee played a key role in working with the President, for planning efficient and productive fall council meeting in Cincinnati in October. We will be closing out the year with the Winter meeting in Lahore in December. All the members are encouraged to actively participate in these meetings. Please feel free to contact me for assistance in this regard.

As the secretary, I am assisting all the committee chairs in accomplishing their objectives and provide a bridge for smooth inter-committee coordination as well. The WebEx system™ is functioning well, and the committees are using for conducting online meetings. The system allows minutes of all council meetings to be stored and accessed online. The main goal is for all council meetings to be accessible online on our website for members' review.

One of the significant challenges we have faced recently is widespread J1 visa denials for at least 34 Pakistani physicians who had already matched in US residency programs. With the assistance of the advocacy committee and the committee of young physicians, a multiprong approach was devised and acted upon. Our efforts reached fruition and almost all our young physicians were able to join their respective programs. I sincerely appreciate the support we have received from APPNA membership as well.

Earlier in the year, the Executive Order on "Travel Ban" had created reverberations that have been felt across the length and breadth of our membership. APPNA's Leadership and Advocacy Committee convened without delay, to work on a rigorous plan of advocacy at the national level. They were also tasked to keep the members abreast of the changing landscape. Participation in these high visibility endeavors enabled me to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the advocacy process. In fact, it was gratifying to get involved during those difficult times and work diligently in providing timely updates to our membership.

Supporting activities of the Committee of Young Physicians is the most pressing matter for the organization. It is very close to my heart, since I have been actively involved in it for a number of years. This team is actively grooming future leaders in the organization and planning various Young Physician Seminars during the summer meeting. Another key activity is to continue Career Counseling in the US as well as in Pakistan.

Work has been actively carried out to assist the Chair of the MERIT Committee to develop a curriculum for cardiovascular medicine in addition to Neurology. All medical colleges in Pakistan are being invited to participate in this program.

The President's vision for APPNA is to focus on civic engagement and participation in our local communities. I am truly convinced of the efficacy of this vision.

APPNA's flagship projects in this respect are the clinics and food pantries that will be run by the local chapters. We had a successful APPNA National Health Care day on October 7 with dozens of free clinics, held concurrently across the country.

In conclusion, I request the membership to continue providing their guidance to engender a superior APPNA.

See you all in Cincinnati! God bless

M. Rizwan Khalid, MD, Secretary