

# An Open Letter from AΩA Executive Director

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Dear Members and Friends of the AΩA Community,

Over the past several months, our country has been experiencing the convergence of a number of events ranging from a multitude of catastrophic natural disasters to civic tension significantly affecting the lives of our patients and communities.

Hurricane Harvey left more than two million Texans displaced, many homeless and in need of medical assistance, as well as financial and emotional support. As one of the largest hurricanes to ever hit the United States, Irma devastated Florida and its 20 million inhabitants as well as several surrounding states.

At the same time, more than 26,000 firefighters were battling nearly 80 wildfires that burned more than 1.6 million acres of terrain in 10 western states, the effects of which impacted air quality on the west coast, Midwest, and beyond.

Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico as a Category 4 storm with sustained winds of 150 miles per hour. Its impact was truly catastrophic, with many island communities still lacking access to fresh water and electricity.

And, most recently the devastating wildfires in Southern California have destroyed more than 1,000 homes and businesses and still rage out of control.

Superimpose on these events, the uncertainty related to health care and legislation, not only affecting the lives of our patients and communities, but also our colleagues.

These events create public health and social consequences, a surge in the deployment of resources, enduring resiliency among our first responders, and a reaffirmation of our values as servant leaders and medical professionals.

As a Society with 131 Chapters in medical schools across the country, we have innumerable students, residents, faculty, alumni, and members who are directly affected by these disasters. To our medical schools and communities in Texas, Washington, Oregon, California, Florida, Puerto Rico, Colorado, Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina, and others effected by these calamities, we will continue to keep you in our thoughts and prayers.

As members of Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society, we need to come together in support of our patients, families, colleagues, and communities, and call on the strengths that come from our Society's core values—scholarship, leadership, professionalism, teaching, and service.

In our profession, we need to practice what we teach—patience, tolerance, acceptance, and high quality health care for all—and provide ongoing leadership. Now more than ever, with a looming physician shortage and ever-growing public health and health care demands, we need compassionate, adept pedagogy that accepts young people regardless of where they come from, their socioeconomic background, or their country of origin. We need to pass along to the next generation of physicians, other health professionals, and those yet to join our profession that we are an inclusive community of practice. We must continue “to be worthy to serve the suffering.”

As leaders we must overcome the chaos and be present for those who rely on us—patients, students, co-workers, colleagues, neighbors, friends, family members. We must remember that we have a commitment to provide selfless service with passionate dedication to the vision and mission of our profession and the people we serve.

Medical professionalism stands on a covenant of trust; a contract with patients and society, regardless of socioeconomic status, or exigent circumstances. When called upon, we serve all in need with dedication, commitment, respect, civility, reliability, and the high ethical standards of our profession and Society.

Our country is reeling from these disasters and decisions that impact huge numbers of people, but we must not let these adversities, or any other outside influences, deter us from what we have dedicated our lives as healers to do—treat everyone humanely, with benevolence, compassion, empathy, and consideration.