

Where SGIM's Been and Where We're Going: Please Contribute to Our Strategic Planning

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It is a great honor and privilege for me to serve as SGIM president and write my first *Forum* column. I would like to review where SGIM has been recently and encourage you to help us think about our future direction as an organization. As a voluntary member-run organization, SGIM has been engaged in incredibly diverse clinical, education, research, and policy activities. We face significant threats and opportunities—both internal and external—as a result of the current political and economic environment. By June 2015, SGIM's committees will submit their plans and budget requests for the upcoming year to Council for review. Thus, it is time to create a strategic plan that enables us to establish priorities and ensure that key issues are addressed.

I would like to highlight several key activities and trends of SGIM over the past five to 10 years. We have tried to stay at the forefront of care delivery issues crucial for primary care and hospital medicine. Early on, we organized conferences to establish research and education agendas for the patient-centered medical home (PCMH), and the most recent annual meeting was on the theme of team-based care. We have an outstanding Health Policy Committee that has been extremely productive (as this issue of *Forum* demonstrates), and we have increased our advocacy impact through collaboration with other professional medical societies in areas of mutual interest. We have established multiple career development opportunities for members, including

the mentoring programs, the TEACH program for junior clinician-educators, and the Academic Hospitalist Academy. We have been fueling the pipeline to primary care with programs such as the "Proud to be GIM" campaign led by Ann Nattinger, which tells first- and second-year medical students about the rewards of a primary care career. We have maintained the "let a thousand flowers bloom" approach, tapping into the great creativity and energy of members, resulting in diverse high-quality workshops, abstracts, and sessions at the annual meeting and impactful activities led by our committees, task forces, and interest groups. We've engaged in modern forms of communication and networking as a society through implementation of GIM Connect and social media.

Despite these accomplishments, 2015 is a potentially dangerous time for SGIM. It remains an uphill battle to recruit students to enter primary care fields. We have to combat the stinging image of the general internist as a hamster on a treadmill churning out patients in an inefficient system. The Affordable Care Act has provided health insurance to millions of Americans, but the rapid shift from fee-for-service payment to value-based payment schemes and global payment arrangements, including accountable care organizations, capitation, and bundled payments, has created new uncertainties for primary care. Research funding remains tight, with agencies such as the Agency for Healthcare

Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) under annual political siege. Graduate medical education funding may change, as powerful organizations such as the Institute of Medicine call for substantial reforms that would affect general internal medicine (GIM) and academic health centers.

Yet the flip side of threat is opportunity. Our greatest strength as a society is you—our members. Thanks to our members, some of the most innovative thinkers and implementation specialists in academic medicine today, SGIM continues to provide leadership targeted to improve our health care system, our care of patients, and the education of our trainees. It is crucial for us not to be complacent or passively accept the status quo. The famous story about hockey legend Wayne Gretzky comes to mind. When asked to explain what made him great, Gretzky replied: "I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been." That's why we need to devise a strong strategic plan now.

While checking the wording of Gretzky's quote, I came across a number of his other sayings that are relevant for us now:

- "Procrastination is one of the most common and deadliest of diseases, and its toll on success and happiness is heavy."
- "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."
- "Hockey is a unique sport in the

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sense that you need each and every guy helping each other and pulling in the same direction to be successful.”

Who knew Wayne Gretzky was such a sage philosopher?

Let me share with you one of the directions SGIM will be going in this year. A new initiative for SGIM will be a focus on population health, an emerging issue facing health care systems and organizations with major implications for GIM. Caring for populations is a new endeavor that impacts the care we provide patients. It requires of us new teaching methods and new research approaches and broadens the scope of what it means to be a physician. As the voice of GIM, SGIM can serve a pivotal role in development and implementation of the population health agenda. We are currently in the process of planning a conference

dedicated to population health issues in conjunction with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Pediatrics Association, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, and the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine. This conference will be a catalyst for future collaborations with these organizations on population health issues. Russ Phillips from Harvard and Leora Horwitz from New York University and the SGIM Research Committee have been doing an outstanding job as SGIM's leaders on this conference initiative. The theme of the SGIM 2016 annual meeting will also be population health. I am delighted that Steven Simon of the Boston VA Medical Center and Harvard and Margaret Lo of the University of Florida have kindly agreed to chair and co-chair this meeting. Steven and Margaret have a long history of generous service to SGIM and are universally re-

spected and well liked for their leadership and collegiality. I am looking forward to devoting a future *Forum* column to discussing population health with you in more detail.

Please contribute to the discussion on strategic priorities for SGIM during this crucial period. A discussion thread on GIM Connect is devoted to this topic, so please offer your thoughts and comments. We seek input from as many stakeholders as possible for this endeavor. At the annual meeting in Toronto, the SGIM Council and committee chairs engaged in a great conversation. We also received the wise advice of SGIM's past-presidents at their annual breakfast meeting. Your input is critical and your suggestions invaluable. On behalf of the SGIM Council and staff, thank you very much. We look forward to working with you on establishing SGIM's strategic direction. **SGIM**