



## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

By Suzanne Gillespie, MD, RD, CMD

### AMDA Is Needed Now More Than Ever

I recently sent holiday cards to family and friends. The card, adorned with pictures that highlighted the memorable moments of 2022, was emblazoned with the message “What a year!” As I reflect on the recent activities of AMDA – The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine, it strikes me that the same message applies. Since we last gathered a year ago for our 2022 Annual Conference in Baltimore, our professional society has been tireless in its mission to develop and support the workforce and to improve quality in PALTC settings. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disproportionately burden the workforce and residents of our care settings, there is unprecedented interest in improving long-term care, and the work of our Society is more important than ever.

#### Current Relationships

In order to accomplish our work, the Society has advanced several collaborative relationships that target support and improvement in PALTC. These relationships are critically important to our field because they strengthen everyone's understanding of the complex issues in PALTC and amplify evidence-based messages to broad, diverse audiences.

In October, I was proud to represent the Society in a roundtable discussion between the White House COVID-19 Response Team, federal public health officials, and other presidents of leading organizations that represent America's physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician associates to discuss efforts to protect people against and treat COVID-19 this winter. Health care professionals play a critical role in ensuring older adults receive the best care to prevent and treat COVID.

Inspired by the roundtable, the Society collaborated with the American Society of Consultant Pharmacists, American Association of Nurse Practitioners, American Academy of Physician Associates, and Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association to release “COVID-19 Vaccination and Therapeutics in PALTC Toolkit: Resources for Clinicians” (Nov. 14, 2022; <https://bit.ly/3QzwBM0>). This open-access toolkit, which includes concise, ready-to-use resources to promote the benefits of the COVID-19 bivalent booster and oral antiviral therapeutics, has been widely disseminated and used.

The Society also serves an important role in collaborative PALTC advocacy efforts. We are working with Consumer Voice, the Green House Project, and others to produce several policy podcasts focused on how to achieve the goals of

President Biden's 2022 White House plan to improve nursing home care (“Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Steps to Improve Quality of Nursing Homes, Oct. 21, 2022,” <http://bit.ly/3QOkNpn>). We've joined Leading Age, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, the Hartford Foundation, and others in the Moving Forward Coalition (<https://movingforwardcoalition.org/>), an effort to operationalize the recommendations of the recent National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) report (*The National Imperative to Improve Nursing Home Quality*, National Academies Press, 2022, doi:10.17226/26526).

We are partnering with the American College of Emergency Physicians to establish workgroups with the primary goal of developing guidance (best practices, definitions, toolkits) on senior-friendly emergency medicine and improved transitions of care. These projects include formulation of best practices in the form of guidelines and/or protocols on the management of asymptomatic hypertension, asymptomatic bacteriuria/urinary tract infections, and agitation. Our hope is to help nursing homes, emergency departments, and hospitals understand their joint capabilities and, through these best practices, ensure optimal care for older adults.

The Society has been an active partner of the West Health Institute in its “Collaborative for Telehealth and Aging.” The collaborative completed a survey of U.S. clinicians to describe the uses as well as the perceived advantages and challenges of telehealth and age-friendly telehealth practices. Ongoing work will build on this research to develop guidance and resources for optimizing telehealth with older adults. The need for resources like these is readily appreciated by PALTC clinicians like me, who have struggled to navigate the intricacies of deploying telehealth modalities in nursing homes and assisted living facilities during the pandemic.

The Moving Needles Project (<https://movingneedles.org/>), now in year two of a five-year cooperative agreement between the Society and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, continues our efforts to make routine adult immunization a standard of care for PALTC residents and an expectation for staff. Working with pilot sites from nursing homes, assisted living, and home- and community-based services, the team is using quality improvement interventions to test strategies to improve immunization rates. Again, we see the

Society leading timely, high-quality collaborative work that is sure to impact thousands of lives.

#### Policy Efforts

The Society's efforts to advocate for policy updates to improve PALTC have also been needed more than ever before. Highlights of these efforts in 2022 include remarkable milestones toward increased recognition of the importance of engaged medical directors. California's milestone legislation AB 749, requiring certification for medical directors, is anticipated to increase the number of those enrolling in our medical direction trainings. Other states are working on similar legislation.

Our team is working to ensure access to high-quality educational experiences. This policy change also affords an important opportunity to understand the impact of certified medical directors. We are working with leading health service researchers to design and deploy research to better understand the medical director workforce and their efforts and impact.

Following years of advocacy from our members, the Nursing Home Disclosure Act, new legislation requiring public reporting of a facility's medical director, was introduced in the 117th Congress in September 2022 and has recently been reintroduced to the 118th Congress. In national and local venues, the Society has engaged in countless discussions with legislators, governmental agency leaders, and other stakeholders about the importance of identifying and engaging medical directors during the survey process. In so many ways, it feels as though medical directors are on the cusp of the recognition they have long and richly deserved.

#### Educational Tools

The Society continues its tradition of developing evidence-based educational materials and clinical tools. Highlights from 2022 include the 3Ds (delirium, depression, and dementia) clinical practice guideline update, which is available online (<http://bit.ly/3DCPG>) and includes relevant guidance for clinicians evaluating and treating dementia, delirium, and depression in PALTC.

Webinars, such as the recent two-part “Medicare Billing and Coding Update,” have offered timely answers for new regulations (<https://apex.paltc.org/>). We have now produced more than 230 podcasts (and counting), effectively making conversations about hot topics in PALTC readily accessible to learners everywhere.

#### The People Behind the Society

Critical to the Society's work are the outstanding contributions of our superlative staff. Over and over, we call on them, and they consistently respond with unwavering commitment to our mission, vision, and values. As president and member, I could not be more grateful for their support.

I am also grateful for the strong leadership that Phil Sloan, MD, MPH, and Sheryl Zimmerman, PhD, provided during their tenure as editors-in-chief of *JAMDA*. I have no doubt that our new editors-in-chief, Barbara Resnick, PhD, CRNP, and Paul Katz, MD, CMD, will carry on this tradition.

In response to the planned retirement of our executive director, Chris Laxton, CAE, we convened an executive director search committee and have retained the firm Vetted Solutions. The search process is on schedule to identify a new executive director before Chris's planned retirement in spring 2023. Chris's contributions to the Society are beyond measure. We gratefully celebrate his leadership and wish him the best in his retirement.

There have been many changes in our lives in the past few years, both in and outside of health care. In PALTC, it has been a time of significant loss and stress. Society members need each other now more than ever before. In our online forums, at our in-person meetings, and in the shared experience of our work, the Society's culture of caring and support has been a compassionate antidote to burnout.

My sincere gratitude goes to the committee and board members who lead this family. By contributing your time, energy, and intellect to our mission, you have changed countless lives, including my own. I invite members to become a part of this special group of people. If you are interested in serving on a society workgroup or committee, please reach out via our website. Our next president, Milta Little, DO, CMD, will be appointing new committee members soon. She is sure to lead us to new heights in the year ahead, and your help will be invaluable.

As I conclude my presidency, I am honored and humbled to have served in this role. My journey with the Society began in 2005 when I attended our Annual Conference as a Foundation Futures participant. As a geriatric medicine fellow, my participation came when I needed to determine the direction of my fledgling medical career. The Society

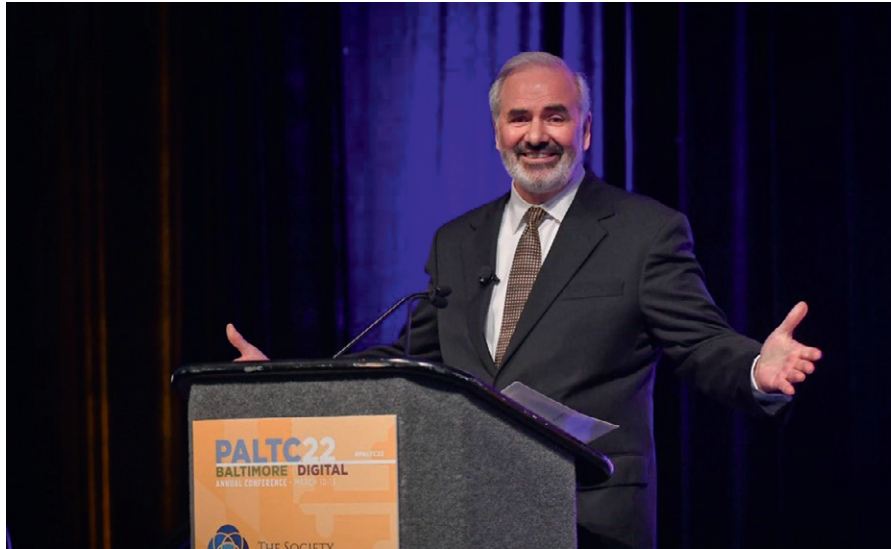
# NEWS FROM THE SOCIETY

## Laxton Leaves a Legacy of Growth, Change, and Innovation

Ten years ago, Christopher Laxton, CAE, became the executive director of AMDA – The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine. He brought with him 35 years of experience in nonprofit leadership, governance, and operations, as well as firsthand knowledge of the workings of PALTC. Last year, Mr. Laxton announced that he would be retiring this spring, and *Caring* sat down with him in January 2023 to reflect on his tenure with the organization, his fondest memories, and the tremendous impact he has had on the organization so many PALTC practitioners call their professional home.

In many ways, Mr. Laxton's past led him to the Society. In his role as executive director, he has been able to use his skills and experience in management, medical publishing, credentialing, strategic planning, and more to lead the Society. "I've had the opportunity to use a career's worth of experience in this position, and that has been very gratifying," he said.

As he looks to his time after the Society, Mr. Laxton said that he will most miss the people. "I have great admiration and affection for our volunteer leaders and members. They bring so much of themselves to a field that is not well understood. Our volunteers have very robust involvement, and we have a strong board of directors," he explained. "I've also been fortunate to work with a committed, hardworking staff. They've shown great agility and passion, even in the most trying of times. I'm very proud of our team."



Christopher Laxton at PALTC22 in Baltimore, Maryland.

Although the volunteer leadership and staff are small in number, Mr. Laxton noted, they have had a huge impact. He said, "Our reputation in the field is that we must be a large organization with lots of people, but we actually are small and lean. The strength of our volunteers has really allowed us to punch above our weight class."

### Challenges and Legacies

Mr. Laxton's time at the Society has been marked by many successes as well as some challenges. "When I first joined the organization, we had moved away from pharma industry support, and we had to build a very different business model. There were some years of deficits, but I am pleased with our cash management. We have only gone into our line of credit once in 10 years, and that was to build a

strong infrastructure and to upgrade our database and website. That is a source of great pride," he said.

Of course, the pandemic was beyond devastating. "COVID itself presented a huge clinical challenge. We knew so little about it, just that it presented a huge risk to our residents. We didn't know if we had the tools and resources to protect them. [Personal protective equipment] was in short supply, and we didn't have a vaccine. We had to find ways to address all this," he said. The organization responded with great efficiency, energy, and teamwork.

During the pandemic, the Society started putting out information daily, particularly to address rumors and misinformation in real time. They also started an online discussion group where people could share expertise and

ask questions; and the organization held COVID-specific webinars and podcasts. "There was so much anxiety and fear, and we were able to help dampen this. I was pleased to be in a leadership role during this time, but I can't take credit for our response to COVID. Our volunteer leaders, members, and staff worked tirelessly, and I'm incredibly proud of them," Mr. Laxton said.

He is also pleased to have led the Society into a new era of membership. The organization is no longer just about medical direction. It now speaks to and serves other members of the interdisciplinary team, including nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and more. Additionally, he said, "We're not just nursing homes anymore. We are committed to the entirety of the post-acute and long-term care setting and providing strategies, tools, and resources to support all PALTC settings."

More than ever, Mr. Laxton noted, the Society has an impact well beyond its membership. "It's important to offer resources to those beyond our membership. For instance, during the pandemic our COVID information and resources were available to everyone, and that is still true. We also have webinars and other programs, such as the Drive to Deprescribe and More of a Good Thing initiatives, that are available for everyone," he said. "The more we do this, the more we extend our mission to the entire clinical team and have a greater impact."

A growing and strong advocacy program is another success Mr. Laxton nurtured. "We didn't do Hill visits [to Washington, DC] before, but I was persuasive about their value. And we've done them every year since I started here," he said. Of course, they weren't held during the pandemic, although they did have some Zoom meetings with legislators and their staff. As a result of these efforts and the relationships established, the Society was able to get a bipartisan bill introduced to mandate that nursing homes disclose who their medical director is. "This is a huge accomplishment that was 10 years in the making," said Mr. Laxton. "If it is signed into law, I want to be part of the signing ceremony."

### Goodbye, Hello

Mr. Laxton will miss much when he steps down as executive director. "I will especially miss the collegiality of our AMDA family. I love working with our volunteers, and I will miss all our members and staff," he said. However, he will have a full plate with a move to Portland, OR, where he and his wife are building a house next to their daughter's home. "I will be spending much of my time chasing my grandchildren, and I'm looking forward to that," he said with a smile.

## President

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offered me the inspiration, knowledge, and community that I needed. The rest, as they say, is history.

At our 2023 Annual Conference in Tampa, I am elated to be ushering in the largest number of Foundation Futures participants ever: about 90 including 12 advanced practice clinicians! Please join me in welcoming these new members of our Society. In number, diversity, and commitment, they embody the evolution and impact of PALTC. They are the future leaders of our field, and they are needed now more than ever.



Dr. Gillespie is president of AMDA – The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care. She lives in Rochester, New York, where she is associate professor of medicine at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**March 9-12, 2023**

**PALTC23**

Tampa, FL

Website: <https://bit.ly/3QXC1iE>

**April 19, 2023**

**NCSPALTC Annual Seminar**

Sioux Falls, SD

Website: <http://bit.ly/3jXKjMK>

**April 19, 2023**

**Parkinson's Disease: 21 Pearls from Sub-Specialty Practice**

Website: <http://bit.ly/3K7RJJaR>

**April 28, 2023**

**CMDA Annual Conference**

Website: <https://cmda.us/event-4819273>

**May 17, 2023**

**NYMDA Spring Education Meeting**

Albany, NY

Website: <http://bit.ly/3YT5PRS>

**July 21-23, 2023**

**Core Synthesis Summer Session**

San Antonio, TX

Website: <https://bit.ly/3j1XDyJ>

**August 25-26, 2023**

**Ohio Long-Term Care Symposium**

Dublin, OH

Website: <http://bit.ly/3YwKCx1>

**October 14-15, 2023**

**CPALTC Annual Meeting**

Charlotte, NC

Website: <http://bit.ly/3K7e2gP>

**December 1-3, 2023**

**Core Synthesis Virtual Fall Session**

Website: <https://bit.ly/3j1cFFa>