

PRESIDENT'S LETTER | TROY ELANDER, MD

A Fond Farewell

Thanks for jobs well-done **BY TROY ELANDER, MD**

IN MY FINAL President's article of the year, I want to thank those who make a difference for me in my medical circle. We all lead busy lives and, in our rush to get things done, it's all too easy to overlook those who make our lives easier. I know that others help me and I'd like to recognize them for making my days run better.

First, as a surgeon, there are many in my local surgery center and hospital that enhance my experience. In Pre Op, nurses Irene and Arlene call my patients the day before surgery, answering their questions and preparing them for what to expect. This is the first step in reassuring patients and helping to ease their fears. On the day of surgery, while I'm busy working, they reliably make sure my next cases are being prepared the way I prefer—ensuring safety and compliance with paperwork regulations. Next, in the OR, my scrub nurses, Raoul or Mireya, anticipate my every move. They remember my quirks, and quietly, efficiently ensure the case proceeds smoothly.

The circulating nurses, usually Melissa or Jodie, set the tone for the OR. They know how to comfort patients through their friendly conversation, always finding a topic of common interest. They adjust the room temperature, provide needed blankets, and get the head angle just right—all the little things to create the best environment for success.

Then I have to be thankful for my anesthesiologists. They consult with the patient, exude confidence and compassion, and reflect well on me. While I operate, I am grateful they work behind the scene monitoring vital functions. I perform better because they remove a burden from me.

And finally, I am thankful for our many recovery room nurses. They ease the transition from OR to home, preparing patients for their next step. A friendly, efficient, confident nurse strengthens the patient. Calling them the day after reassures as a final touch of compassion.

In my office, there are also many for whom I am thankful. Sylvia and Onisha are on the front lines, answering phones, making appointments, and collecting payment. I know they take heat from patients, which doctors are usually spared. My back office assistant, Faye and now Kimberly,

orchestrates the symphony of patient/doctor flow. A good assistant ensures efficiency and tries to prepare for the myriad requests we physicians can come up with in our examining rooms. Rita is my billing specialist who battles daily with insurance companies and anticipates their games of denial and delay. Tracking down payment is a constant challenge and often draining. I am also grateful for my independent co-workers—optometrist Dr. Shah and optician Doree. I am thankful to have those who perform independent of my exams. Finally, I am most thankful for my office manager Nancy. A good office manager is almost like family. They oversee everything



from employment laws to patient complaints to making a schedule work even when last minute changes are required due to an emergency meeting. I am especially proud of Nancy for her leadership nationally with ophthalmic executive office managers. She has my back when I don't have time to look over my shoulder.

At the offices of LACMA there are so many who make my life easier and work tirelessly for the doctors of L.A. County. To start, Lisa Le is the Executive Assistant who schedules meetings, records meetings, and reminds me of where I am supposed to be. The hours get late but her friendliness never wavers. Carol Chaker is in charge of membership. Membership is always our greatest concern as all-too-often the efforts of LACMA are taken for granted. Carol, and her teammate Rosario, never give up. Eva Moravcik heads our financial department. When she arrived, years ago now, this department was in need of a turn-around.

Thanks to her efforts, and her staff, Priscilla and Robert, we now have sound financial footing. In government affairs, Luis Ayala keeps us relevant on issues and with political figures in Sacramento. I thank him for keeping state politics in perspective. In a leadership role, Alberto Tovar has been our COO for seven months. He is young, full of energy, and fresh ideas on what LACMA can become. Our CEO, Rocky Delgadillo, also started in October. He promised to fight hard for doctors and has not disappointed—getting to all corners of our huge county recruiting doctors and encouraging them to take back their profession. Finally at LACMA, I want to thank our *Southern California Physician* editor Cheryl England and her sales team, Christina and Karen. Christina has been a source of encouragement for me from day one—it always helps to know someone is in your corner. Similarly, Cheryl, as editor, continually challenges and reassures. It's comforting to be on the same page as one's editor. All LACMA members should take the time to get to know these special people who work hard for us.

There is no end to the list of people I could thank. Former LACMA Presidents have always made themselves available for friendly advice. I am indebted to them. My Executive Committee has been open-minded, forward thinking, and challenging. Our Board is diverse, but needs to be more so, and is adjusting to its new make-up. We need to utilize their talents more. And ultimately, at the end, how can anyone thankful look back on a year such as this and not include one's own family? They understand the time sacrifices which come with volunteerism and make it easier to carve out time away from them. For me, that's Diane, Samantha, Annie, and William.

There, I have released myself of thanks. As physicians, we have to continuously thank those who help us do what we need to do. Thank you fellow physicians—I can't tell you how much it means to me to hear from those of you who have read these columns. You have made my year.

Troy Elander, MD, is an ophthalmologist at Elander Eye Medical Group in Santa Monica. He is the 140th President of the Los Angeles County Medical Association. ■