



SPRING 2026

FOMA *Journal*

FLORIDA OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



JAMES TOWRY, DO, FAOCD, FAAD

INSTALLED AS THE 2026-2027 FOMA PRESIDENT

About FAIRx

Floridians for Attainable and Innovative Rx (FAIRx) is a physician-led and patient-focused coalition dedicated to helping insured Floridians access the life-sustaining, innovative therapies they need. We are working to raise awareness of discriminatory insurer benefit design that could keep Florida families from essential treatments.

Why do we need FAIRx?

More than 13 million Floridians live with at least one chronic disease. If all Floridians had access to the treatment they need, an estimated 82,500 lives could be saved annually, according to the Partnership to End Chronic Disease. Unfortunately, health insurers in Florida are increasingly designing their plans in order to shift larger portions of health care costs onto those with chronic diseases by increasing out-of-pocket costs for critical therapies.

How can FAIRx help?

While FAIRx hopes the state - with support from lawmakers - will continue down this promising path, we know this effort will require Florida's patient and provider groups, as well as individual patients, to speak with one voice.

Together, we want to engage in an advocacy campaign to:

- + Support state policies that make insurance coverage, coinsurance and copays more transparent and equitable.
- + Urge regulators and state policymakers to take action to protect all insured Floridians from out-of-pocket costs that could jeopardize their health.
- + Share personal stories from patients whose out-of-pocket costs are causing hardship for them or their families.

FAIRx Campaign Partners



How can Florida physicians help?

- + Join FAIRx. Visit our website to gather the facts and share the physician's perspective on the impact of high patient out-of-pocket costs.
- + Help get patients involved. Tell them about the organization and urge them to share their story on the Take Action page of our website.

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Event Calendar Back Cover



(L-R): Jason Winn, Esq., FOMA Legal Counsel and FL District 100 House of Representatives Candidate Dr. Eric Stelnicki



AOA President-Elect Richard Thacker, DO, MACOI Installed newly elected FOMA President James Towry, DO, FAOCD, FAAD, into Office.



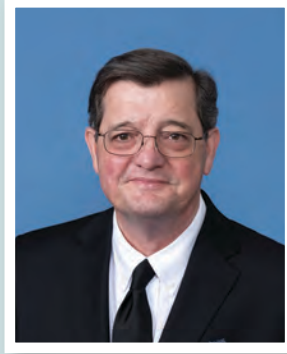
Congratulations to our 2026 Student Award Recipients

Published by the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association



FLORIDA OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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JAMES TOWRY, DO,
FAOCD, FAAD
President

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"We all stand on the shoulders of the DOs who have come before us and I am honored to be the 2026-27 FOMA President."

Founded in 1904 as the Florida Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, the association's name was changed in 1942 to the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA).

FOMA is the state association of Osteopathic Physicians in Florida. The Executive Office is located in Tallahassee, Florida.

The mission of FOMA is to advocate for the osteopathic profession and to promote the health and well-being of Floridians through osteopathic principles and practices. FOMA is the third largest state osteopathic medical association in the country and continues to advance the science and art of osteopathic medicine in Florida.

Florida is divided into 17 geographical districts, called District Societies, which are affiliates of FOMA. The association's policymaking body is the Board of Trustees, elected from each of the District Societies to two-year terms. The Board of Trustees holds quarterly meetings. Each and every one of you who live in one of these 17 districts is encouraged to join your district and get more involved with FOMA.

We all stand on the shoulders of the DOs who have come before us and I am honored to be the 2026-27 FOMA President. I anticipate continuing the work of the leaders who have come before me as well as working with our Executive Board and Board of Trustees.

Regards,

James Towry, DO, FAOCD, FAAD
FOMA President

**I anticipate
continuing the
work of the leaders
who have come
before me as well
as working with
our Executive
Board and Board of
Trustees.**



Dr. Towry Surrounded by his Family



(L-R): Mary Towry, Dr. James Towry, Keri Towry, Elizabeth Towry, and Sarah Towry.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

MICHELLE W. LARSON

The FOMA and staff are working diligently to ensure organizational goals and objectives on behalf of the membership are achieved. We want to thank our Bureau of CME members for their hard work in planning our FOMA Continuing Medical Education events. Additionally, the FOMA staff and committee members have been preparing for the installation of the 2026 – 27 FOMA President, James Towry, DO, FAOCD, FAAD and the new Executive Committee.

I thank the FOMA Executive Committee for their trust and support and I am excited to lead the FOMA into the future!

The FOMA Medical Education Committee, Chaired by Ronald Burns, DO, continues to work on the 2026 FOMA CME Programs. These include the 2026 FOMA Live Convention, Feb. 6 – 8, at the Marriott Harbor Beach in Ft. Lauderdale, with over 325+ physicians and students registered. We will record those lectures for the 2026 FOMA Virtual Convention, March 6 – 8, which has over 600 physicians registered. Thank you to the FOMA Team for your help in coordinating these important events. Thank you to Osteopathic Foundation East Orlando, for their generous sponsorship of our CME programs and the 2026 FOMA Poster Competition.

The 2026 Legislative Session began, Tuesday, January 13th. The FOMA’s Legislative team, lead by Chair, Paul Seltzer, DO, along with Jason Winn, Esq. and Chris Lyon, Esq. are monitoring the 2026 Legislative Session and are meeting regularly at the Capitol as well as during Committee meetings, to discuss legislative priorities and issues impacting physicians and their patients. Many issues, that did not pass last year are returning, please look for the FOMA Legislative Update in the FOMA Newswires, which are sent out on Fridays, during the Legislative Session.

Special thanks to Steve Winn, for his 51 years of dedication, passion and support to the FOMA, our members and the osteopathic profession. I thank the FOMA Executive Committee for their trust and support and I am excited to lead the FOMA into the future!

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER REPORT

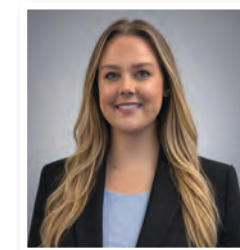


ANDREW FLOYD

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, ANDREW FLOYD, MBA, CAE, CMP-HC, reports that the FOMA added 742 members over the past year! The new members include: 386 – Active, 41 - 1st Year, 13 – 2nd Year, 72 – Public Health/Military, 50 - Inactive, 105 - Out of State, 58 – Resident, 5 – Associate, and 12 – Faculty. If you know a DO in your area who is not a FOMA member, invite them to one of your District Society meetings or tell them how they can get involved in the FOMA. This is a great chance to interact with your peers and keep up to date on the latest changes in osteopathic medicine and to showcase what the FOMA has to offer! If you would like our office to send someone a membership packet, please contact me at the FOMA Executive Office.



DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, KAYE TAIT, reports that registrations for both the 2026 Live & Virtual FOMA Conventions have been coming in steadily! Employer tax forms for the 4th quarter of 2025 have been completed and sent to the IRS. The 2025 W2’s, have been filed with the IRS and given to all of the FOMA employees. All of the FOMA 1099 forms have also been filed with the IRS and mailed/emailed to all of our vendors for 2025. Dues for the 2026-2027 billing cycle, will be generated in April and sent to all FOMA members in time for the May 1st, renewal period. The FOMA sincerely appreciates all of our members, and your continued support!



DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, KAYLEE KELLY, reports that FOMA successfully hosted its 31st Annual Osteopathic Medicine & Health Awareness Day in December, with over 50 students and physicians in attendance. We have recently released our 2026 Winter FOMA Journal, which is available on the FOMA website. Currently, FOMA staff are preparing for the upcoming live convention where the new president and officers will be installed. After the live convention, we will be gearing up for the virtual convention in March. We encourage you to visit our website and follow us on all our social media channels to keep up with all things FOMA!



EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR, LETISSA HARRIS, has been assisting with membership (new members) and with the FOMA Virtual & Live convention registrations and the FOMA Virtual Seminar. In addition, she is assisting members with CE Broker, and items to renew their FL license.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN
Paul D. Seltzer, DO

“The FOMA 2026 Know the Issues is forthcoming and will be published soon after the Governor makes his final determination on transmitted legislation.”

appears prepared to handle them outside the compressed timeline of the regular session.

From a broader political perspective, the stalemate unfolding in the final week of the session is less about the relatively small difference between the chambers’ spending proposals and more about positioning among the state’s most powerful leaders. Speaker Perez is attempting to redefine the House as a more fiscally conservative and independent policymaking body, while President Albritton is balancing Senate priorities with the need to eventually reach a compromise that keeps the government funded. At the same time, Governor DeSantis remains a dominant political figure in the state, but legislative leaders are demonstrating that they are willing to negotiate on their own terms rather than simply advance the governor’s agenda. The result is a session ending not with a clear legislative victory for any one branch of government, but with a visible recalibration of power inside Florida’s Republican-controlled government—one that will continue to shape policy debates when lawmakers inevitably return to Tallahassee in the coming weeks.



Michelle Larson, CAE, CMP & Congressman Webster

Looking beyond the end of the regular session, Florida lawmakers are almost certain to return to Tallahassee for multiple special sessions in the coming months. The first and most immediate will likely be a budget session to finalize the state’s spending plan once negotiations between the House and Senate leadership produce agreed-upon allocations. Under the Florida Constitution, the Legislature must pass a balanced budget before July 1, when the new fiscal year begins, so there is still significant time for negotiations to continue outside the formal session environment. The expectation among most Capitol observers is that leaders in the House and Senate will continue working behind the scenes after adjournment, allowing budget chairs to resolve major differences before calling members back for a short special session focused almost entirely on budget conference reports and final passage.



Jason D. Winn Esq. & FL Dist. 100 Candidate Dr. Eric Stelnicki

A second anticipated special session will focus on congressional redistricting, which has become an increasingly likely outcome as legal challenges continue to work their way through the courts regarding Florida’s current congressional map. The existing map was drawn during the 2022 cycle under the direction of Governor Ron DeSantis and significantly reshaped several districts across the state. Depending on court rulings expected later this year, lawmakers may be required to revisit portions of that map. Because redistricting is politically sensitive and procedurally complex, legislative leadership has already begun preparing for the possibility that a dedicated special session will be required to address it.

Another major issue likely to drive a special session is property tax reform. Over the past year, state leaders have increasingly discussed structural changes to Florida’s property tax system, including proposals that could eventually be placed before voters as a constitutional amendment. House leadership under Daniel Perez has expressed interest in broader tax relief and structural reforms, while Senate leadership under Ben Albritton has signaled a willingness to explore options that could reduce the property tax burden for homeowners while maintaining stable revenue for local governments and school districts. Because any significant change to the property tax framework could require a constitutional amendment or major statutory revisions, lawmakers may need a separate special session to debate and craft the proposal in time for potential placement on the November ballot.

Taken together, these expected special sessions suggest that the conclusion of the regular legislative session will not represent the end of policymaking activity in Tallahassee this year. Instead, it marks the beginning of a second phase of legislative negotiations in which leaders will attempt to resolve the budget, respond to court developments affecting congressional districts, and potentially pursue one of the most significant tax policy debates the state has seen in years. For legislative leaders and the governor’s office, these upcoming sessions also represent an opportunity to recalibrate relationships following a tense regular session and to shape the policy agenda heading into the next election cycle.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE as of March 13, 2026



Doctor of the Day Marc Dobbertien, DO, FACS, MBA, CPE, and Representative Berny Jacques (R-59).

As the 2026 regular session of the Florida Legislature reaches its scheduled conclusion on March 13, it is increasingly clear that lawmakers will leave Tallahassee without fulfilling their only constitutional obligation: passing a balanced state budget. The House and Senate remain divided on overall spending levels, with the House advancing a budget proposal of roughly \$113.6 billion while the Senate’s proposal is closer to \$115 billion. While the dollar gap of roughly \$1.4 billion may appear modest within a budget of this size, it reflects deeper disagreements about spending priorities and the direction of state government. Because the chambers have not even agreed on top-line allocations, the formal conference process required to reconcile the budget cannot begin, making it practically impossible for a final budget to pass before the scheduled end of the session.

The most likely procedural outcome is that the Legislature will adjourn the regular session on time and return later for a special session dedicated to completing the budget. Extending the regular session is technically possible, but in recent years, legislative leaders have preferred ending the constitutionally required 60-day session and reconvening once negotiations have progressed. Doing so allows leadership more

flexibility to negotiate outside the pressures of the regular session calendar. If that occurs, lawmakers would likely return in late March or early April to finalize the budget through a brief special session once allocations are resolved.

Beyond the budget dispute, the dynamics between the leadership of the two chambers and the governor’s office are shaping the final week of the session. The House, led by Daniel Perez, has taken a notably more assertive posture this year, emphasizing fiscal restraint and signaling a willingness to block or slow Senate priorities. Perez has repeatedly emphasized that the House intends to scrutinize spending more aggressively and reduce the overall size of government, a stance that has put the chamber at odds with the Senate’s more traditional budgeting approach. The Senate, under Ben Albritton, has maintained a somewhat larger spending framework and has sought to preserve several policy priorities that the House has been reluctant to advance. The tension has manifested itself not only in budget negotiations but also in the movement of legislation, with several Senate-backed proposals never receiving hearings in the House.

The relationship with the governor has also added a layer of complexity to the session’s closing days. Ron DeSantis has continued to push major priorities, particularly on tax policy and affordability measures, but legislative leaders—especially in the House—have increasingly demonstrated independence from the executive branch. Over the past several years, the Legislature has gradually asserted more control over fiscal and policy decisions that had previously been closely aligned with the governor’s agenda. As a result, negotiations over the budget have become not only a debate over numbers but also a reflection of shifting institutional power between the executive branch and the Legislature.

Even after the budget is ultimately resolved, lawmakers are expected to return to Tallahassee for additional special sessions on other major issues. One anticipated session will address congressional redistricting following ongoing legal developments that could require adjustments to the state’s current map. Another likely special session will focus on property tax policy, as legislative leaders and the governor continue to discuss potential reforms and the possibility of placing a constitutional amendment before voters in the November election. Because these issues are complex and politically significant, leadership



2026 FOMA-PAC Roll of Honor

The FOMA-PAC wishes to express its appreciation to the following contributors. Your financial contributions and your participation in the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association Political Action Committee (FOMA-PAC) demonstrate your commitment to osteopathic medicine and your concern for the future of quality healthcare for all Floridians.

10 Diamond Presidential

(AT LEAST \$30,000)

Jeffrey Grove, DO
Jamie Goodman, DO

9 Diamond Presidential

(AT LEAST \$25,000)

Joanne Bujnoski, DO

8 Diamond Presidential

(AT LEAST \$20,000)

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James Milne, DO
James St. Louis, DO
Joel B. Rose, DO
William Stager, DO, MPH
Stephen R. Winn

7 Diamond Presidential

(AT LEAST \$15,000)

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Richard R. Thacker, DO

6 Diamond Presidential

(AT LEAST \$12,500)

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Anna Hayden, DO
Michelle Mendez, DO

5 Diamond Presidential

(AT LEAST \$10,000)

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Florida Society of the ACOFP
Mark A. Foppe, DO
William Hightower
Marc Kaprow, DO
Ronald Renuart, DO
James Towry, DO

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Linda Delo, DO
Michelle Fiorillo, DO
Walter B. Flesner, III, DO
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Col. Jose Thomas-Richards, DO, Ret.

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(AT LEAST \$5,000)

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Robert J. George, DO
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Broward Health Medical Center
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Sherry Thacker
Amelia Tunanidas Pantelis, DO
Claudia Peterson, DO
Ty Tvedten, DO
Kenneth Webster, EdD
West Palm Hospital Medical Staff, Inc.
Gregory Williams, DO
Sanford Zelnick, DO



1 Diamond Presidential

(AT LEAST \$1,000)

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Kenneth Blaze, DO
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Gordon Crozier, DO
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William Stager, DO
Joel D. Stein, DO
Ronald Surowitz, DO
Richard R. Thacker, DO
James Towry, DO

THE FOMA 2026 Annual Conventions

FEBRUARY 6-8 (LIVE) AND MARCH 6-8 (VIRTUAL)



AOA President-Elect Richard Thacker, DO, MACOI
Installed newly elected FOMA President James Towry,
DO, FAOCD, FAAD, into Office.

The 2026 FOMA Live Convention, February 6-8 (offered up to 27 AOA 1A credits) at the Marriott Ft. Lauderdale Harbor Beach Resort & Spa & 2026 Virtual Convention (offered up to 30 AOA 1A credits), held March 6-8, were both a success.

This year, the Live Convention had 425+ osteopathic physicians, students, and exhibitors attend. The Virtual Convention had over 1,700+ osteopathic physicians and students participating from all regions of the country!

Topics for both Conventions included: Memory & Dementia, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Artificial Intelligence & Medicine, OMT Workshops, and more! Both Conventions included the Florida mandatory hours for re-licensure.



2026 - 2027 FOMA Executive Committee.

(L-R): James Towry, DO, FAOCD, FAAD, FOMA President; Jeffery Nelson, DO, FACOFP, FOMA President-Elect; Joseph Sassano, DO, FOMA First Vice-President; Michelle Mendez, DO, FOMA Second Vice-President; Kayvan Amini, DO, FACC, FOMA Director-at-Large; Marie Florent-Carre, DO, MPH, FOMA Director-at-Large; Cesar De Leon, DO, FOMA Director-at-Large; Sean McCann, DO, FOMA Director-at-Large; Shailesh Rajguru, DO, FACN, FOMA Director-at-Large; Bruce Rankin, DO, CPI, MRO, FACOFP, Immediate Past-President (not pictured).

DR. BRUCE RANKIN PRESENTED THE 2026 FOMA AWARDS



FOMA Presidential Recognition Award

Presented to Doris Newman, DO, FFAO, BCOM Dean
& Steve Winn, Former FOMA CEO



FOMA Lifetime Achievement Award

Presented to Joseph Giaimo, DO, MACOI, FCCP



FOMA Distinguished Service Award

Presented to Richard Thacker, DO, MACOI, AOA
President-Elect



**Stephen R. Winn Friend of the
Osteopathic Profession Award**

Presented to Melissa Carter, Sr. VP of Education &
Member Services, FMA



**A.T. Still Florida Osteopathic
Manipulative Treatment Award**

Presented to Sara Lohbauer, DO, Walter Flesner, DO,
April Smith, DO & Richard Van Buskirk, DO (not
pictured)

Congratulations to our 2026 Student Award Recipients!



(L-R): Joseph Sassano, DO, FOMA Awards Chair; Bruce Rankin, DO, CPI, MRO, FACOFP, FOMA Immediate Past President; Abigail Dugas, OMS-II, OCOM; Kenneth Quezada, OMS-II, OCOM; Yama Xu, OMS-II, NSU-KPCOM; Priya Patel, OMS-II, LECOM-Bradenton; Salvatore Corallo, OMS-II, BCOM; Michael Yingst, OMS-II, BCOM.

Not Pictured: Martin Naguib, MMS, OMS-II, LECOM-Bradenton

FOMA gives a round of applause to all the 2026 award winners.

Thank you for your commitment and leadership.

Thank You

TO OUR 2026 EXHIBITORS & SPONSORS

- Andrew Jackson Insurance
- Osteopathic Foundation East Orlando
- American Association of Kidney Patients
- Florida Department of Health Office of Medical Marijuana Use
- Florida PDMP Foundation
- LMU - Lincoln Memorial University
- Lubell Rosen Law Firm
- NSU KPCOM
- NSU KPCOM - Area Health Education Center Program (AHEC)
- Professionals Resource Network

Thank You

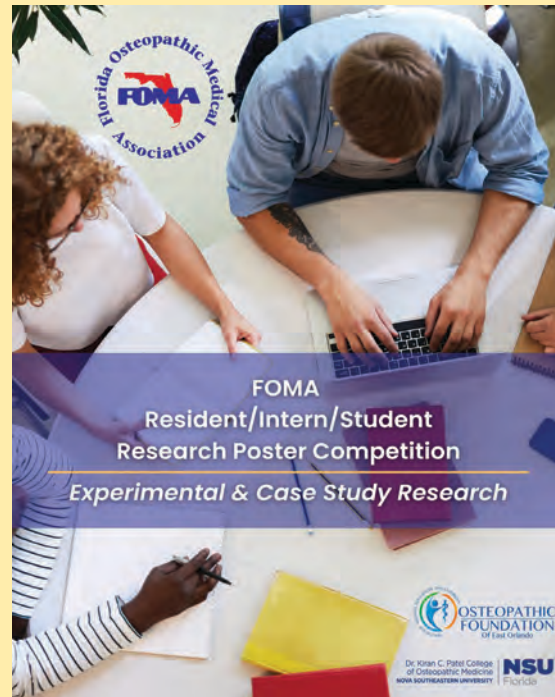
TO OUR 2026 EXHIBITORS & SPONSORS



CONVENTION SPOTLIGHT

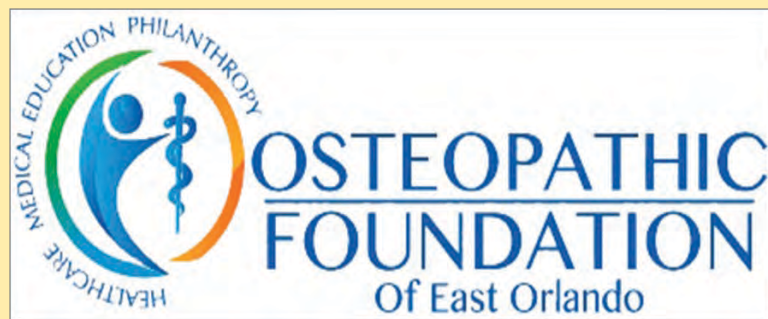


2026 FOMA Student/Resident/Fellow Research Poster Competition



The annual FOMA Resident/Intern/Student Research Poster Competition was held on Thursday, February 5th, via ZOOM during the FOMA Live Convention. Individuals presented their research while judges scored their presentations/research.

Special thank you to the Osteopathic Foundation of East Orlando for their continued sponsorship of this event and NSU KPCOM - Tampa Bay Campus, judges, and staff who oversaw the competition.



Congratulations to the 2026 winners!

Case Study Category

- FIRST PLACE** **Marissa Castronovo, M.P.H., OMS3**
A Rare Case of Situs Inversus in a Premature Neonate
Nova Southeastern University, Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine
- SECOND PLACE** **Salma Bennis, B.S., OMS3**
*A Rare Presentation of a Toenail Infection Attributed to *Alcaligenes faecalis**
Nova Southeastern University, Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine
- THIRD PLACE** **Allyson Resnick, B.S., OMS3**
Posterior Reversible Encephalopathy Syndrome Following Recreational Nitrous Oxide Use: A Case Report
Nova Southeastern University, Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine

Experimental Research Category

- FIRST PLACE** **David Vasserman, B.S., OMS3**
Fresh-Frozen Non-Irradiated Allograft versus Autograft ACL Reconstructions in Sport Related Injuries Result in Similar Performance Outcomes in Patients 25 years of Age and Younger
Nova Southeastern University, Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine
- SECOND PLACE** **Saahil Naik, M.H.S., OMS2**
Effects of Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment on Shoulder and Hip Range of Motion in Athletes: A Quantitative Secondary Analysis
Nova Southeastern University, Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine
- THIRD PLACE** **Salvatore Corallo, OMS2**
Midpoint Analysis of a Longitudinal Study Using Spencer's Technique to Improve Range of Motion in Collegiate Baseball Players
Nova Southeastern University, Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine

Future of Osteopathic Medicine (FOMA) Award

- Victoria Estevez, OMS3**
Twin Reversed Arterial Perfusion Sequence with Acardius Acormus: The Role of 3D Imaging and Pelvimetry in Obstetric Planning
LECOM Bradenton

2026 NSU KPCOM FOMA Committee

Dr. Les Ross; Dr. Tania Arna; Dr. Kris Lalji; Debra Lapointe; Alex Arana; Yashira Morales

2026 FOMA Poster Competition Judges

Dr. Anna Potter; Dr. Randall Gregg; Dr. Cyril Blavo; Dr. Mayur Parmar; Dr. Khavir Sharieff;
Dr. Suzanne Riskin; Dr. Ken Johnson; Dr. Deepesh Khanna; Dr. Jyotsna Chawla



FOMA STUDENT/RESIDENT/FELLOW RESEARCH POSTER COMPETITION

2027

DETAILS COMING SOON!

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September 25 - 27, 2026

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The 27 Credits Include:

- 5 Florida Mandatory Hours: 2 hours each of Prevention of Medical Errors and Prescribing Controlled Substances, and 1 hour of Florida Laws, Rules, and Professional Medical Ethics
- 2 hours of Domestic Violence & 1 hour of HIV/AIDS
- 6 hours of On-Demand Videos
- Attendees will have 30 days to complete the courses online

REGISTRATION FORM

Name (please print): _____

FOMA member: Y / N AOA #: _____ FL License #: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Specialty: _____ Certification: _____

Osteopathic College: _____ Graduate Year: _____

Please Choose Category Below:

**FSACOF members will receive FOMA member rate.*

Registration Type	Member Rate Early Bird Until 8/25/2026	Member Rate Starts 8/26/2026	Non-Member Rate
<input type="checkbox"/> Practicing DO	\$600	\$625	\$900
<input type="checkbox"/> Life, Military, or Retired DO	\$400	\$425	\$525
<input type="checkbox"/> Osteopathic Resident/Fellow	\$150	\$175	\$225
<input type="checkbox"/> Osteopathic Student	No Fee	No Fee	No Fee
<input type="checkbox"/> Sunday Only - 5 Mandatory Hours	\$325	\$350	\$525
Registration Total:	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

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Please register online at foma.org or make checks payable to the FOMA and mail to:

FOMA
2544 Blairstone Pines Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32301
Or fax the form to FOMA: 850-942-7538

**FOMA must be notified of any cancellation in writing 14 days prior to the meeting in order to receive a refund. Cancellations received after this date will be charged a \$50 administrative fee.*



FLORIDA OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Questions?
1-800-226-3662
www.foma.org

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2026-2027

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Martin Babaev, VP, SGA, Burrell COM FL

FROM AROUND THE STATE... DISTRICT REPORTS

DISTRICT SOCIETY 2

Michelle Mendez, DO, FOMA Second Vice-President, served as Doctor of the Day at the FL Capitol

On February 19, Michelle Mendez, DO, proudly served as Doctor of the Day at the Florida Capitol. Sponsored by Senator Yarborough, Dr. Mendez participated in the longstanding tradition of providing medical care in the Legislative Clinic for lawmakers, staff, and Capitol personnel.

Dr. Mendez brings a distinguished record of service to both her patients and her country. A Navy veteran, she completed a two-year tour aboard the USS John F. Kennedy (CV67), where she served as General Medical Officer and Women's Health Officer for a crew of more than 5,000 sailors. In addition, she served as the supervisory physician for eight Flight Surgeons, two General Medical Officers, and a team of Physician Assistants and Independent Duty Corpsmen.

Her participation in the Doctor of the Day program reflects her continued commitment to service and leadership within the osteopathic profession.



Michelle Mendez, DO, FOMA Second Vice President, and Max McKinley, OMS III, NSU-KPCOM.

DISTRICT SOCIETY 3

District Society 3 would like to congratulate Jeffrey Nelson, DO, FACOFP on being elected as the 2026-2027 FOMA President-elect.



Jeffery Nelson, DO, FACOFP
Orlando, FL

District Society 3 would also like to congratulate April Smith, DO on being named as one of the winners of the A.T. Still Florida Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment Award.



(L-R): Bruce Rankin, DO, CPI, MRO, FACOFP, FOMA Immediate Past President presents award winners Sara Lohbauer, DO; Walter Flesner, DO; April Smith, DO, Richard Van Buskirk, DO (not pictured) with their awards.

DISTRICT SOCIETY 4

Bruce Rankin, DO, CPI, MRO, FACOFP, FOMA Past President attended the FOMA DS-4 meeting held on Thursday, January 29th, 2026 at the Hyde Park Prime Steak House in Daytona Beach, FL.



Dr. Anthony, FOMA DS 4 President & Dr. Rankin, CPI, MRO, FACOFP, FOMA Immediate Past President

On Friday, March 6th, Chet Anthony, DO, FOMA District Society 4 President, served as Doctor of the Day at the Florida Capitol in Tallahassee.

Sponsored by Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez, Dr. Anthony had the opportunity to walk the halls of the FL Capitol and treat FL Legislators and Capitol staff.



DISTRICT SOCIETY 5

The Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society held its Annual Meeting and Holiday Party at the Sheraton Sand Key Resort in Clearwater Beach, Florida. The celebration drew more than 100 physicians, families, and friends, marking one of the strongest turnouts in recent years. FOMA Immediate Past President Bruce Rankin, DO, FACOFP, CCI attended and delivered greetings on behalf of the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association.

Dr. Michael Hadley, DO, Chairman of the PCOMS Scholarship Committee, announced the recipients of this year's \$2,500 PCOMS Scholarships. Two exceptional osteopathic medical students were recognized:

Natalie Nagib, MPH, Class of 2026, Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM)
Evran Ural, M.S.E., Ph.D., Class of 2028, KPCOM, Nova Southeastern University

The scholarship recognition reflects the PCOMS's ongoing commitment to supporting the next generation of osteopathic physicians.

The 37th Annual Osteopathic Winter Seminar returned to the Sheraton Sand Key Resort with its largest attendance since 2019. Offered both in person and virtually, the program drew strong participation from physicians across Florida and beyond.

Dr. Kevin Ache, PCOMS President served as the Master of Ceremonies welcoming all to the 37 Annual Osteopathic Winter Seminar Presidential Luncheon. He recognized three distinguished physicians selected by the PCOMS Honor and Awards Committee for their exceptional service to the profession, the community, and patient care:

Joseph J. Namey, Jr., DO, FACP, MACOI – Distinguished Service Award
Linda Tripodis Murray, DO – Lifetime Achievement Award
Jennifer S. Hayes, DO – Lifetime Achievement Award



(L-R): Kevin Ache, DO, Joseph Namey, DO, and Anthony Ottaviani, DO



(L-R): Kevin Ache, DO, Linda Tripodis Murray, DO, and Anthony Ottaviani, DO



(L-R): Kevin Ache, DO and Jennifer Hayes, DO

PCOMS continued its longstanding tradition of honoring Pinellas County First Responders from multiple divisions and departments. Nominees are selected by their peers for exemplary service and dedication to the community and recognized at the Presidential Luncheon.



PCOMS was honored to welcome two state and national leaders:

James Towry, DO, FAOCD, FAAD, FOMA President, who brought greetings from the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association

Robert G. Piccinini, DO, D.FACN, President of the American Osteopathic Association (AOA), who addressed attendees with updates on the AOA initiatives and activities



(L-R): Kevin Ache, DO, President PCOMS, Robert Piccinini, DO, AOA President, James Towry, DO, FOMA President

FROM AROUND THE STATE... CONTINUED

DISTRICT REPORTS

In Loving Memory...

Ronald Edwin Grove, DO

Dr. Ronald Edwin Grove died October 29, 2025. Dr. Grove is the father of past PCOMS, FOMA, AOF president Jeffery Grove, DO. A graduate of the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine, in 1962, Dr. Grove practiced family medicine in Paxton, IL relocating in 1980 to Largo, Fla. He was a founder of Suncoast Family Medical Associates along with Dr. Russell Patterson. Dr. Grove was a longtime member of the AOA, ACOFP, Illinois Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons (where he served as treasurer), FOMA, Florida Society of the ACOFP and PCOMS.



Suzie Shettle

Suzie Shettle passed away December 15, 2025. Suzie was the wife of Phillip Shettle, DO past president of the PCOMS, AFOMA, and AAOA. Suzie was very active with PCOMS, FOMA, AFOMA, AOA, & AAOA always there to support the profession. Suzie was the mother of Lee Shettle, DO, current FOMA Trustee and Delegate.



DISTRICT SOCIETY 6

The Broward County Osteopathic Medical Association, District Six, held their monthly board meeting during the FOMA Annual Meeting at the Marriott Harbor Beach Resort. Following their luncheon, the group were pleased to have their picture take with AOA President, Dr. Robert Piccinini, AOA President Elect, Dr. Richard Thacker, Dr. Joshua Lenchus, Past FOMA and FMA President, Dr. Kayvan Amini, past BCOMA & BCMA President.



Board Members and student physicians who attended were: Dr. Vickie Calamese, Dr. Michelle Fiorillo, Dr. Marie Florent-Carre, Dr. Anna Hayden, Dr. Jorge Luna, Dr. Tracy Romanello, Carlie Groesch, Phoebe Shappell, Connor Harmon, Kishan Patel, Amanda Rama, Tim Saunders, and Samantha Diaz. Dr. Marie Florent-Carre, President of the Broward Count Osteopathic Medical Association (BCOMA), presented Mr. Steve Winn with a gift from the BCOMA in appreciation of his many years he served as CEO of the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association.

Dr. Marie Florent-Carre, President of the Broward Count Osteopathic Medical Association (BCOMA), presented Mr. Steve Winn with a gift from the BCOMA in appreciation of his many years he served as CEO of the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association.



(L-R): Phoebe Shappell, Cynthia Peterson, Steve Winn, and Dr. Carre.

DISTRICT SOCIETY 7

FOMA District 7 physicians were well recognized at the FOMA 2026 Convention again this year. Dr. Richard Van Buskirk, D.O., was awarded the FOMA A.T. Still OMT Award for 2026. Dr. Van Buskirk is a legend in our profession and a truly deserving recipient of this award. Congratulations also go out to LECOM OMS II students, Martin Naguib, MMS, OMS II and Priya Patel, OMS II, SGA President for winning FOMA 2026 Student Awards. Besides the plaque presentations, they were also awarded a cash prize. Way to go LECOM!

The next, upcoming FOMA District 7 event is scheduled for March 26, 2026, and it will be a physician-student mixer. This will be our District's seventh such event and it continues to grow every year as well continues to be our best attended meeting. I ask physicians of all specialties to save the date and help guide our LECOM OMS I and OMS II students with their career paths. The students are so appreciative of our time and knowledge. I will be sending out further information on this soon – so save the date.

DISTRICT SOCIETY 10

On December 11, 2025, the Hillsborough County Osteopathic Medical Society (FOMA District 10) hosted its annual holiday dinner meeting at the new location of Mise En Place in Tampa. Fun was had by all. During this event HCOMS annual awards and a student scholarship were presented as well as a tribute to the late Robert Norman, DO.



(L-R): HCOMS President, Allan Escher, FAOCA, DO, HEC-C receives the Physician of the Year Award from Brett Scotch, DO, FAOCO



(L-R): HCOMS President, Dr. Allan Escher and Dr. Brett Scotch presenting the Distinguished Service Award to Janet Nichols



(L-R): Alex Sher, DO, MSN and Junaid Saleh-Esa, DO, MS received Resident Achievement Awards.



Weronika Stelmasiewicz celebrating with her mother

DISTRICT SOCIETY 12

On March 5th, FOMA District Society 12 held a District Society Meet & Greet at The Salted Brick in Ocala, FL. The meeting welcomed attendees to gather socially with their colleagues in the local area. In attendance was FOMA President James Towry, DO, FAOCD, FAAD, to discuss FOMA goals/initiatives for 2026. FOMA Immediate Past President, Bruce Rankin, DO, CPI, MRO, FACOFP, was also in attendance.

Thank you to FOMA District Society 12 President, Diana Graves, DO, for putting the event together.



(L-R): FOMA President James Towry, DO, FAOCD, FAAD; Diana Graves, DO, FOMA District Society 12 President; & Bruce Rankin, DO, CPI, MRO, FACOFP, FOMA Past President



DISTRICT SOCIETY 15

FOMA District 15 would like to congratulate Richard Thacker, DO, MACOI, AOA President-elect on being named the 2026 FOMA Distinguished Service Award Winner.

Congratulations Dr. Thacker!



STUDENT NEWS

Congratulations to all of our student award winners who recieved their award at the 2026 FOMA Live Convention.

Salvatore Corallo, OMS-II, Burrell COM – FL Campus; Abigail Dugas, OMS-II, SGA President OCOM; Martin Naguib, MMS, OMS-II, LECOM – Bradenton; Priya Patel, OMS-II, SGA President LECOM – Bradenton; Kenneth Quezada, OMS-II, OCOM; Yama Xu, OMS-II, SGA President NSU-KPCOM; Michael Yingst, OMS-II, Burrell COM – FL Campus





WELCOME NEW FOMA MEMBERS

MEMBERSHIP REPORT - FEBRUARY 2026

ACTIVE - 93

DISTRICT 1	Arthur Kalman, DO Samantha McCaskill, DO	Cantonment Miramar Beach
DISTRICT 2	Mark Bedard, DO Amanda Cruz-Deweese, DO Jennifer Davis, DO Ivorique Duru, DO Kristin Fernandez, DO Zachary Fleissner, DO Jennifer Katsolis, DO Kenneth Prince, DO Benjamin O'Connell, DO Marinelle Platon-Jones, DO Kristin Schumann, DO	St. Johns County Jacksonville Jacksonville Ponte Vedra Jacksonville Jacksonville Jacksonville Beach Fernandina Beach Jacksonville Beach Ponte Vedra Jacksonville
DISTRICT 3	Michael Cunningham, DO Christina DeAngelis, DO Garren Gebhardt, DO Lindsay Kahn, DO Brenton Priest, DO, MA Jeanette Rodriguez, DO James Stewart, DO	Winter Haven Winter Springs Orlando Winter Garden Winter Garden Lake Mary Orlando
DISTRICT 4	Sokunthirith Thach, DO Arlene Imber-Fine, DO	Orlando Deland
DISTRICT 5	Kavita Gande, DO Timothy Jordan, DO Anna Loyd, DO Brian Mavretich, DO	Largo Largo Saint Petersburg St. Petersburg
DISTRICT 6	Emil Abdalla, DO Laureen Biczak, DO Pablo Calzada, DO Steven Coleman, DO Serge Gardere, DO Mario Gomez, DO	Davie Pompano Beach Pembroke Pines Coral Springs Wilton Manors Davie

ACTIVE CONT. - 93

DISTRICT 6 CONT.	Timothy Huber, DO Faizul Hussain, DO Patience James, FO Benjamin Klein, DO Bindu Niravel, DO Lee Phan, DO Ivonne Reynolds, DO Francis Salazar, DO Ashton Thompson, DO Geidel Zambra, DO	Miramar Oviedo Loxahatchee Ft. Lauderdale Pompano Beach Hillsborough County Parkland Pembroke Pines Ft. Lauderdale Homestead
DISTRICT 7	Krystian Bonilla, DO Lihini Dalzell, DO Rin Grubb, DO Colleen Shank, DO Calvin Tran, DO	Sarasota Bradenton Bradenton Sarasota Lakewood Ranch
DISTRICT 8	Dario Altamirano, DO Jonathan Bratter, DO Philip Claire, DO Michael DeVarona, DO Osmany DeAngelo, DO Ariel Fernandez, DO Raul Fernandez, DO Smith Joseph, DO Neil Mayor, DO Emily Rey, DO Ramsey Saffouri, DO Sachin Singh, DO	Hialeah Miramar Doral Miami Miami Hialeah Hialeah North Miami Miami Miami Bay Harbour Island Miami Beach
DISTRICT 9	Ellen Babinsky, DO Shanel Bhagwandin, DO Yefim Cavalier, DO Gregory Heins, DO Brett Osborn, DO Steven Parr, DO	Jupiter Jupiter Boca Raton Port St Lucie West Palm Beach Sewall's Point

ACTIVE CONT. - 93

DISTRICT 9 CONT.	Fernando Petry, DO David Powers, DO Michael Saltzburg, DO Sabrina Seus, DO Robin Shecter, DO Kerlan St Prix, DO Craig Vogel, DO Richard Weinstock, DO	Stuart Lake Worth Wellington Ft. Pierce Wellington West Palm Beach Palm Beach Gardens Palm Beach Gardens
DISTRICT 10	Robert Brandon, DO Cadat Broderick, DO Wanda E. Cruz, DO Khortnal Delvecchio, DO Brooke Mobley, DO	Tampa Lutz Tampa Tampa Tampa
DISTRICT 11	Marlin Delvina, DO Kevin Encarnacion, DO Salvatore Lacagnina, DO Aldith Lewis, DO Ron Mathew, DO	Cape Coral Cape Coral North Ft. Myers Fort Myers Cape Coral
DISTRICT 12	Aniruddha Logan, DO Addie Patterson, DO Mark Sacher, DO	Newberry Gainesville Ocala
DISTRICT 13	Kathryn Boles, DO	New Port Richey
DISTRICT 16	Laszlo Harmat, DO Amanda Ryan, DO David M. Smith, DO Binh Vu, DO	Vero Beach Titusville Melbourne Palm Bay
DISTRICT 17	Francois Joseph Ferio, DO Lloyd Hughes, DO	Naples Naples

1ST YEAR PRACTICE - 8

DISTRICT 2	Lucy Bolerjack, DO Harshini Sahani, DO	Jacksonville St. Augustine
DISTRICT 5	Christina Bulleit, DO	St. Petersburg
DISTRICT 6	Christopher Blaisdell, DO	Ft. Lauderdale
DISTRICT 10	Lauren Rybolt, DO Michael Wu, DO	Tampa Wesley Chapel
DISTRICT 12	Lindsey Ferko, DO	Ocala
DISTRICT 17	Bryan Perez, DO	Naples

PUBLIC HEALTH/MILITARY - 21

DISTRICT 1	Justin Poissant DO, FAAFP Hermann Gonzalez, DO	Pensacola Niceville
DISTRICT 2	Christopher Bishop, DO Liana Rodriguez, DO	St Augustine Jacksonville
DISTRICT 3	Laura Mendoza, DO Camilo Mohar, DO	Melbourne Oviedo
DISTRICT 5	Victoria McCarver, DO	Largo
DISTRICT 6	Christopher Smith, DO	Lauderhill
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DISTRICT 8	Victoria Camba, DO Marilyn De Leon, DO	Miami Miami
DISTRICT 9	Bruce Hindin, DO Hila Miskin, DO Mark Polsky, DO	Ocean Ridge Jupiter Port. St. Lucie
DISTRICT 10	Marina Antar-Shultz, DO	Tampa
DISTRICT 12	Amanda Massoomi, DO Darrell Zaugg, DO	Gainesville Middleton
DISTRICT 13	Michelle Baker, DO	Riverview
OUT-OF-STATE	Maxwell Cretcher, DO Viviana De Assis, DO Michael Talalaev, DO	San Antonio San Antonio Fargo

INACTIVE/RETIRED - 7

DISTRICT 3	Meadow Good, DO	Maitland
DISTRICT 6	Bruce Peters, DO	Oldsmar
DISTRICT 7	James Hubert, DO Jeffrey Schlachter, DO	Punta Gorda Lakewood Ranch
DISTRICT 9	Jillian Cepeda, DO	Port St. Lucie
DISTRICT 12	Adam Kakar, DO	Fruitland Park
DISTRICT 17	George Fisher, DO	Naples

RESIDENT & FELLOWS - 22

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DISTRICT 6	Sergey Arutyunyan, DO Sumer Mohamed, DO	Davie Davie



WELCOME NEW FOMA MEMBERS

MEMBERSHIP REPORT CONT. - FEBRUARY 2026

RESIDENT & FELLOWS CONT. - 22

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- Joren Manuel, DO Boynton Beach
- Cene Ovince, DO Greenacres
- DISTRICT 10 Mary Arndt, DO Tampa
- Katherine Reavis, DO Tampa
- Sindhu Saba, DO Thonotosassa
- OUT-OF-STATE Hannah Kopelman, DO Englewood
- Natasha Patel, DO Mechanicsville

OUT OF STATE - 23

- Nikitasha Aggarwal, DO Centralia, WA
- Cynthia Brock, DO Marietta, OH
- Lauren Clemmons, DO Dothan, AL
- David Connett, DO Waukee, IL
- Gregory Cusano, DO Benbrook, TX
- Ovidiu Ghita, DO Maryville, TN
- Lawrence Gibbons, DO Portsmouth, RI
- Jack Goloff, DO Christiansted, USVI
- Matthew Grundfast, DO Leesburg, GA
- Toni Hall, DO Nashville, TN
- Patrick Hughes, DO Salt Lake City, UT
- Wendy Kissinger, DO Wadsworth, OH
- Gregory Kozlov, DO Chicago, IL
- Jesse Lopez Jr., DO, FACOS Overland Park, KS
- Olga Martinez, DO Peachtree City, GA
- Anthony Meram, DO Wolverine Lake, MI
- Norvin Ona, DO Buford, GA
- Alberto Panero, DO Sacramento, CA
- Janny Rivera, DO Elmira, NY
- Michael Sampson, DO, FAOASM Atlanta, GA
- Azeem Wasay, DO West Greenwich, RI
- Jeff White, DO Platteville, WI
- Sean Willis, DO Rockville Centre, NY

LIFE MEMBERSHIP - 17

- DISTRICT 1 Bruce Josten, DO Lynn Haven
- DISTRICT 2 Joel Cohen, DO Ponte Vedra Beach
- Guy Strauss, DO, FACOI Glen St. Mary
- DISTRICT 3 Christian Kovats, DO Lake Mary
- Raul Rodas, DO, FACOS Lake Mary
- James Snyder, DO Sanford
- DISTRICT 4 Alyn Benezette, DO Ormond Beach
- DISTRICT 6 Timothy Goshen, DO Wilton Manors
- Curtis Johnson, DO Plantation
- DISTRICT 7 James Valenti, DO Lakewood Ranch
- DISTRICT 8 Gerardo Perez, DO Miami Lakes
- DISTRICT 9 Andrew Seltzer, DO Palm Beach Gardens
- DISTRICT 10 Arleen Lally, DO Sebring
- Joel Rose, DO Tampa
- DISTRICT 11 David Gomeringer, DO Ft. Myers
- Alan Gruning, DO Ft. Myers
- Dareld Morris, DO Alva
- DISTRICT 13 Ira Fialko, DO Beverly Hills

IN MEMORIAM ~

- DISTRICT 3 Thomas Chambers, DO (DMU-COMS-1962)
 - DISTRICT 5 Suzanne (Suzi) Shettle (Past President of AFOMA & AAOA) (Loving Wife of Philip Shettle, DO, Past President FOMA & AOA)
 - DISTRICT 9 Michael S. Goldman, DO (CCOM-1967)
 - DISTRICT 10 Kaydian Hunter, DO (NSU-KPCOM-2018)
- CHULUOTA LARGO
BOCA RATON SEBRING

WELCOME NEW STUDENT MEMBERS FROM THE 5 COMS

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For further information regarding your membership, contact:

Andrew Floyd, MBA, CAE, CMP-HC, Chief Operating Officer
 2544 Blairstone Pines Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32301
 850.878.7364 Email: Andrew@foma.org



FOMA would like to thank everyone who has donated to the **FOMA FAMILY TREE**

NEW FAMILY TREE LEAVES

James Towry, DO & Family - In Honor of Steve Winn, FOMA Executive Director for 50+ years. Thank you for your guidance & leadership.

FAMILY TREE LEAVES

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Henry Araya
Dr. & Mrs. George Arcos
John Bailey, DO
Barker, Hebblewhite & Lynch
Greg Barker
The Bellingar Family
Dr. Nicole Bixler & Family (2)
Wayne Bizer, DO
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Andrew Jackson, LLC - In Memory of Morton Terry, DO

Andrew Jackson, LLC - Honoring the Memory of Robert S. Hand, DO, FOMA President 1987-88

Nicole Bixler, DO - In Memory of Rob Heath, Father of Nicole Bixler, DO, FOMA President 2016-17

Robin Dybas - In Honor of & with much Love to Our Parents, Grandparents & Best Friends: Minnette & Alan Kaye

FOMA District 2 - In Honor & Memory of Lionel Gatien, DO, Physician, Leader, Mentor

FOMA District 10 - Honoring Kenneth E. Webster, EdD: Over 30 years of Leadership & Dedication to the osteopathic profession & Hillsborough County Osteopathic Medical Society

FOMA Physicians & Friends - In Memory of Kelsey Brooke Tatum, DO, Honorary LECOM Bradenton, 2021

FOMA Physicians & Friends - In Memory of David Levine, DO (6/16/44 - 7/21/2007) FOMA President 1997-98

FOMA Physicians & Friends - In Honor & Memory of Howard L. Neer, DO, FOMA President 1976 - 77 & AOA President 1988 - 89: A Pioneer, Educator, Mentor and Friend

FOMA Physicians & Friends - In Honor & Memory of Marcelino Oliva, DO, Legislative Chairman, FOMA President 1974 - 75 & AOA President 1988 - 89

FOMA Family - In Honor of Marcelino Oliva, DO, FOMA President 1974 - 75, Lora Lee Oliva & Family

Don Jablonski, DO - To My FOMA Family, in Honor of Catherine Jablonski and Don Jablonski, DO, FOMA President 1995-96

Dr. & Mrs. Gregory James - In Honor of David Kudelko, DO, graduate of KCOM

Dr.'s Kenneth & Michelle Johnson & Family: Thank you FOMA for all that you DO - Simply the Very Best!

James McCormick, DO - In Loving Memory of Patricia McCormick

In Loving Memory of Morton Morris, DO, JD, FOMA President 1978 - 79, and Marie G. Morris

Fred Porcase, DO - In Honor of our Brother, Friend, Father & Husband:
John Anthony Fetchero, DO (6/4/51 - 1/19/2015)

Melvyn Rech, DO - In Memory of Hamilton & Eric Rech & Morton Morris, DO, JD, FACOS, FAOAO

Dr. & Mrs. William Silverman: In Honor of our Children - 2022

Dr. Mrs. Joel Stein - In Honor and Loving Memory of Dr. Leon & Shirley Stein

Dr. & Mrs. Brett Thomas: Keep Osteopathic Medicine Pure

James Towry, DO & Family - In Honor of Paul E. Wilson, DO, FOMA President 1954- 55 & AOA President 1974 - 75

Doug, Nancy and Zach Treadway - In Loving Memory of Tanner Douglas Treadway (1994 - 2014)

West Palm Hospital Medical Staff - In Memory of Martin J. Frisosky, DO,
for his Service, Leadership, Wisdom and Friendship

Stephen & Judy Winn and Family - In Loving Honor of Senator Sherman & Roslyn Winn

In Honor of Michelle Winn Larson, CAE, CMP becoming FOMA CEO - Mom, Dad & Family - 2026

Winn Families & William Hightower - In Loving Memory of Christopher Marc Burns (5/16/90 - 3/19/2016)

Scan the QR code to purchase a FOMA Family
Tree or an In Memory & Honoring Leaf.





Florida HEALTH | Project READY

Healthy Aging, Healthy Brain

IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DIAGNOSIS AND COGNITIVE ASSESSMENT

Over the past year, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) has been working closely with several partners, including the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association (FOMA), to develop and distribute resources related to Alzheimer’s Disease and other related Dementias (ADRD).

As ADRDs are some of the most difficult conditions to diagnose and treat, osteopathic physicians play an important role in ADRD management.

Osteopathic physicians are well-suited to practice early detection and provide a timely diagnosis because of their experience in looking beyond symptoms to explore how lifestyle and environmental factors impact a patient’s current and future quality of life. Moreover, a whole-person approach to treatment is ideal because these diseases take a toll on a patient’s mind, body, and support system.

Early diagnosis and identification of modifiable risk factors is crucial to improving health care outcomes for patients and their families. However, because cognitive decline can be difficult to diagnose in a primary care setting, it is important to use validated cognitive assessment tools to screen patients 65 and older during yearly Medicare visits.

In collaboration with the Alzheimer’s Association, DOH has made a variety of resources available through the Project READY webpage and the featured QR Code, including cognitive assessment tools, CPT code information, and professional development opportunities.



Project READY and the Healthy Aging, Healthy Brain Initiative is brought to you by the Biomedical Research Program under the Public Health Research Section within the Division of Community Health Promotion.



Protecting Patients from Counterfeit Medicines and Illicit Pharmacies

Osteopathic physicians are trusted by their patients to provide important health information. Patients look to their physician for guidance on health and potential threats to their overall well-being. One rapidly growing threat is the proliferation of counterfeit medicines and unregulated “Canadian” pharmacies.

[Interpol’s Operation Pangea XVI 2025](#) underscored the magnitude of this issue:

- 50.4 million doses of counterfeit and unapproved medicines were seized worldwide,
- 769 suspects were arrested for selling counterfeit or unapproved medicines, and
- 123 criminal groups dismantled for selling counterfeit products.

Counterfeit versions of medicines have even been identified in developed countries like Canada, Australia, and here in the United States. Because these illegitimate substances are not produced under regulated conditions, patients can unknowingly ingest harmful or even lethal substances.

The risks for patients are real. Counterfeit antibiotics may lack the active ingredient, delaying treatment and leading to worsening illness. In more life-threatening cases, unregulated and untested pills can be unknowingly laced with lethal substances, such as fentanyl. In 2024, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) seized more than 60 million fentanyl-laced counterfeit pills and nearly 8,000 pounds of fentanyl powder. In 2025, the DEA fentanyl seizures have represented over 232 million deadly doses. And according to Interpol, “some fake medicines have been found to contain mercury, arsenic, rat poison, or cement.”

Educating patients and staff about these could be lifesaving.

Unfortunately, many patients are lured by online offers promising “Canadian” or “cheaper” medications without realizing that more than 95% of online pharmacies operate illegally. These operations often bypass U.S. pharmaceutical standards and safeguards that protect consumers, including prescriptions verified by a licensed physician, clear labeling, and transparent sourcing.

In addition to unsafe drugs, patients face the risks of identity theft and financial fraud when purchasing from unverified networks.

What can we, as physicians, do to help protect our patients? We must educate our patients to:

- **Buy only from reputable pharmacies** — ideally brick-and-mortar or verified online pharmacies approved through the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) “Buy-Safely” program.
- **Avoid websites or social media sellers** that do not require a prescription.
- **Contact your pharmacist or doctor** if you have any questions, concerns, or experience unusual effects.

Counterfeit medicine remains a global public health threat. As osteopathic physicians, we can remain vigilant, help raise awareness, and guide patients to trusted sources. Safe medicine is effective medicine.





**FLORIDA OSTEOPATHIC
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

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**NEXT LICENSURE CYCLE:
APRIL 1, 2026 - MARCH 31, 2028**

EVENT CALENDAR



**2026 FOMA VIRTUAL SEMINAR
SEPTEMBER 25-27, 2026**

**2027 FOMA LIVE CONVENTION
FEBRUARY 26-28, 2027**

**MARRIOTT TAMPA WATER STREET
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