

# Buckeye Osteopathic Physician



Reimagined Ohio Osteopathic Symposium Evolves  
with a Modern, Engaging Experience for Attendees



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE OHIO OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION





# OHIO OSTEOPATHIC SYMPOSIUM

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MEDICINE IN OHIO

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# Buckeye Osteopathic Physician

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# The Power of You

By Douglas W. Harley, DO, FACOFP, FAAFP  
President, Ohio Osteopathic Association

**The** Ohio Osteopathic Association (OOA) recently convened a transformative session focused on envisioning a thriving and successful organization years into the future. Participants from across the state brought diverse perspectives and aspirations to the table, converging on key areas of alignment that will drive the organization's progress. This shared vision reflects OOA's commitment to advocacy, leadership development, education, and the broader osteopathic impact, ensuring its relevance and influence in the evolving healthcare landscape.

OOA's advocacy efforts center on policy-setting, lobbying, and representing osteopathic medicine at both state and national levels. Building and nurturing relationships with legislative consultants, healthcare coalitions, and hospital systems will remain a priority. These efforts will focus on advancing osteopathic recognition, ensuring that the profession's unique contributions are understood and valued by policymakers and the public alike. By increasing public awareness and appreciation of osteopathic medicine, the organization can build stronger connections with the communities it serves. This broader impact will enhance OOA's reputation and highlight the profession's unique contributions to holistic, patient-centered care.

A structured approach to leadership development will guide OOA's growth,



engaging students and residents early and fostering a robust pipeline of future leaders. Mentorship will span all stages of the medical journey, from medical school through residency and into practice.

Furthermore, the organization will prioritize ensuring that governance reflects the broad spectrum of voices within the osteopathic community.

Increasing member participation in the policy-making process is critical. By actively involving members in drafting resolutions and contributing to the AOA House of Delegates, the OOA will enhance its impact. These efforts will ensure that our national organization's policies are shaped by a wide array of perspectives, fostering a unified voice for the osteopathic profession. This unified voice will empower the organization to set the agenda for osteopathic medicine not only in Ohio but also on a national scale, influencing key healthcare decisions and policies.

Many of Ohio's existing policies and protections benefiting osteopathic physicians exist largely because of the OOA's past dedicated advocacy efforts. From keeping osteopathic medicine at the decision table to securing fair payment for the holistic patient care you provide, we're on the front lines

ensuring that osteopathic medicine thrives. But here's something important to consider: the OOA is the only voice dedicated solely to advancing and protecting your ability to practice osteopathic medicine in Ohio. And while every DO in the state benefits from these efforts, the resources that fuel this advocacy come only from members like you. Your membership is more than a financial contribution—it's an investment in your future and the future of osteopathic medicine in Ohio. The future of osteopathic medicine in Ohio is strong, especially with the three campuses of Ohio University, the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, and the newest osteopathic medical school at Xavier. Osteopathic medicine is a growing influential force in the medical community of Ohio. The recent announcement of the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation's \$70 million investment to Ohio-trained osteopathic physicians at OU-HCOM further solidifies that voice at the table.

The power of OOA lies in the collective vision and dedication of all its members. By prioritizing advocacy, leadership development, osteopathic education, and sustainability, the organization will thrive, advancing the profession and elevating its influence. Together, we can achieve a future where OOA stands as a beacon of excellence and a powerful advocate for osteopathic medicine. Won't you be a part of the movement that protects YOUR heritage, profession, and ability to practice. ■

# Executive INSIGHT

## Reflecting on a Year of Progress and Looking at the Road Ahead

By Heidi A. Weber, MBA, CAE  
Executive Director

**As** I close out the first year of my tenure at the helm, I want to recognize the collective efforts that have strengthened the Ohio Osteopathic Association (OOA) and positioned our members—and the osteopathic community at large—for continued success. From advocacy wins to growing member engagement, I have dedicated the last 12 months to amplifying the voices of osteopathic physicians in Ohio and ensuring they are heard, valued, and supported. **Relationship building is at the heart of everything I do.**



This work would not have been possible without the dedication and collaboration of so many. I am deeply grateful for the support of our Board of Trustees, particularly our officers, and our past presidents, both OOA and AOA, whose leadership and commitment have driven progress and fostered meaningful change. Together, we have seized new opportunities while tackling the critical challenge of honoring our commitments to members, strategic partners, and stakeholders, all the while advancing efforts to modernize the organization for a thriving future.

### **Strong Advocacy, Big Impact**

Over the course of the year, the OOA took decisive action to strengthen the voice of

osteopathic physicians in Ohio. We:

- Maintained a strong connection with the Ohio Department of Health and the State Medical Board of Ohio to be a presence and reminder of our commitment to Ohio's healthcare landscape.
- Led national advocacy efforts by advancing Ohio resolutions at the AOA House of Delegates, contributing policy language on osteopathic recognition exams, physical exams in medical education, and informed consent.
- Supported the next generation of osteopathic leaders by creating opportunities for student engagement and professional development.
- Convened OOA's first Strategic Planning retreat in almost a decade, where leaders and partners worked together to map out future priorities and set a course for continued growth.
- Attended 10+ political fundraisers to show the osteopathic support of candidates. The OOA PAC gives to both sides and encourages candidates to learn more about us.

These efforts reinforced OOA's influence at the state and national levels, underscoring our key role as champions for the profession. Danny Hurley from Capitol Consulting has guided the OOA in connecting with lawmakers and other →

Ohio healthcare organizations.

### **Looking Ahead: Advocacy That Delivers Results**

OOA remains committed to building a strong policy framework that gives osteopathic physicians a strong voice in shaping the future of healthcare in Ohio and beyond. Together, we will build on the progress made in 2024 and take bold steps to expand advocacy engagement and boost our impact statewide.

A key priority in the coming year is reimagining **Ohio DO Day** in October or November at the Statehouse in Columbus. This noteworthy event connects members with top decisionmakers in face-to-face meetings, providing a powerful, personal forum to discuss pressing healthcare issues that directly impact their practice and their patients. Stay tuned for this signature event.

To prepare participants for these critical conversations, OOA will introduce two new initiatives aimed at enhancing advocacy skills and legislative engagement: The **OOA Advocacy Bootcamp** will provide physicians and students with targeted training on effective policy communication, while the **Student Lobbyist Shadowing Program** will provide the next generation of osteopathic leaders with hands-on experience navigating the legislative process. Together, these programs will equip members with the knowledge and confidence to drive meaningful change in healthcare policy.

In addition, OOA will host quarterly **Advocacy Town Hall Meetings** across the state to keep members informed and engaged with real-time updates on legislative developments. These gatherings will provide a space to discuss emerging healthcare policies, share insights on regulatory changes, and strategize on how best to advocate for the profession.

## **Coalition of Ohio Osteopathic Associations**

### **Strength In Numbers**

A strong, unified voice is the key to effective advocacy. OOA knows that building solid partnerships with allied groups will strengthen our collective impact and protect the

future of osteopathic medicine.

In 2025, collaboration remains central to OOA's advocacy strategy. Through partnerships with the **Ohio Coalition of Primary Care Physicians** and participation in the **House of Medicine**, the association will work alongside other physician groups to address shared priorities and reinforce the critical role of osteopathic medicine in Ohio's healthcare landscape. To foster deeper collaboration among osteopathic groups across the state, the association is also establishing the **Coalition of Ohio Osteopathic Associations**. These aligned efforts are vital to amplify the collective voice of the profession, tackle key policy challenges, and advance a healthcare system that prioritizes patient-centered, physician-led care.

### **Convening the Osteopathic Community**

One of the most exciting opportunities to connect as a profession is coming up in April—the Ohio Osteopathic Symposium. This premier event brings together DOs, residents, and students to learn, collaborate, and advance their careers.

This year's Symposium promises expert-led CME sessions, and invaluable networking opportunities. The Symposium will also host two influential national leaders in osteopathic medicine. **American Osteopathic Association President Teresa A. Hubka** and **American College of Osteopathic Physicians Incoming President Gautam J. Desai, DO**, will attend in person, underscoring the significance of this event and Ohio's leadership role within the profession.

I encourage you to explore more about the Symposium in this magazine and make plans to attend this pivotal gathering of osteopathic professionals.

### **Thank You for a Meaningful Year**

Serving as your Executive Director has been an honor, and I am inspired by the dedication, resilience, and leadership of our members. We've made great strides, but there's still more work to do—and we'll do it together.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve the osteopathic community. ■

## OOA Honors Joanne Barnhart's Years of Dedicated Service

The Ohio Osteopathic Association (OOA) extends its deepest gratitude to Joanne Barnhart, who retired at the end of 2024 after 35 years of dedicated service as Director of Accounting and Membership. Throughout her tenure, Joanne played a vital role in ensuring the smooth operation of OOA's financial and membership functions, making a lasting impact on both staff and members alike.

Her unwavering commitment to supporting osteopathic physicians and the association's mission was evident in everything she did, from managing essential financial processes to fostering strong relationships with members. Joanne's attention to detail, problem-solving skills, and warm presence made her an invaluable part of the OOA team.

"Joanne's dedication and professionalism played a key role in keeping our organization running efficiently," said OOA Executive Director Heidi A. Weber, MBA, CAE. "Her work behind the scenes helped support our members in countless ways, and she will be greatly missed."

The OOA thanks Joanne for her many years of service and wishes her all the best in this well-earned next chapter.



## Advancing Osteopathic Medicine in Ohio: The Heritage Translational Research Center

Construction is officially underway for the Heritage Translational Research Center, a state-of-the-art facility set to open in late 2026. Made possible by a \$16.2 million gift from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation, this center will serve as a hub for groundbreaking osteopathic research and innovation in Ohio.

Part of a \$70 million commitment from the Foundation to the Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine, this

initiative will enhance translational research, advance healthy aging studies, and support primary care-focused osteopathic education. The center will house cutting-edge equipment, expand research opportunities for medical students, and further position Ohio as a leader in osteopathic medicine.

By strengthening research capabilities and increasing scholarship opportunities, the Heritage Translational Research Center is set to attract top talent, secure major grants, and drive new medical discoveries that will directly impact patient care in Ohio communities. This investment ensures that osteopathic medicine continues to grow, innovate, and serve the evolving healthcare needs of the state.



## Expanding Osteopathic Education: Xavier University Breaks Ground on New Medical School

Ohio's osteopathic community is set to grow with the construction of Xavier University's new College of Osteopathic Medicine, a 130,000-square-foot facility scheduled for completion in 2026. The college will welcome its first class of students in fall 2027, making it Ohio's first new medical school in nearly 50 years and the world's first Jesuit osteopathic medical school.

For Ohio Osteopathic Association (OOA) members, this development is a significant step forward in strengthening the osteopathic physician workforce. The new medical school will help address the state's physician shortage, particularly in primary care and underserved areas, by training future osteopathic doctors with a holistic, patient-centered approach.

The facility will feature a state-of-the-art simulation hospital, advanced lecture spaces, and hands-on learning environments designed to equip students with the skills they need to succeed in today's healthcare landscape. With its focus on whole-person care and innovative education, Xavier's program will complement and enhance Ohio's existing osteopathic medical training, creating more opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and professional growth for current and future DOs.

As Ohio continues to lead in osteopathic medicine, this new institution represents an investment in the profession's future—ensuring more highly trained physicians to serve communities across the state. ■

# Charting the Future

## OOA's Bold Vision for Modernization

In late 2024, the Ohio Osteopathic Association (OOA) leaders and stakeholders convened for a strategic planning retreat to capture their long-range vision for the organization, identify areas of focus, and set goals and metrics for the coming years. Facilitated by Vista Cova, LLC, a highly respected strategic planning firm in the association industry, and led by its CEO, Lowell Aplebaum, Ed.D., FASAE, CAE, CPE, the retreat focused on several key areas, each vital to advancing the organization's mission. From advocacy and leadership development to mentorship, education, and governance, retreat participants worked to define strategies that will shape OOA's future for years to come. 2016 was the last time that OOA conducted a strategic planning process.

"Modernizing OOA has been a top priority since I stepped into this role a year ago, and this strategic planning retreat was a crucial step in that process," said OOA Executive Director Heidi A. Weber, MBA, CAE. "We're not just looking at where we are today—we're building a stronger, more agile organization that meets the evolving needs of osteopathic physicians and students. This retreat allowed us to set a clear direction, ensuring that OOA remains a healthcare association leader in advocacy, education, and professional development for years to come."

### Advocacy and Leadership Development

The retreat opened with a dynamic conversation about OOA's role in shaping healthcare policy. Expanding OOA's influence at both the state and national levels emerged as a key priority, reinforcing the association's long-held commitment to support strong advocacy initiatives. Through lively discussions, several recommended actions were identified as pivotal to meeting this goal, including expanding the organization's already robust lobbying efforts and legislative engagement in Ohio and beyond, as well as forging strong, strategic relationships with healthcare coalitions, organizations, and government agencies.

Engaging students and residents early in their career was also identified as a key priority to foster a strong, sustainable leadership pipeline. Participants specifically recognized the need to rethink OOA's role as the go-to resource for leadership development and prioritized the development of a plan to position the association as a trusted hub that Ohio's osteopathic community can rely on for guidance and support—from medical school through clinical practice. To achieve this, OOA



leaders explored new initiatives, including the development of a student advocacy shadowing program, a state DO Day, and a student retreat in the Fall of 2025.

### Mentorship and Community Building

A strong professional network and meaningful mentorship opportunities are essential to the future of osteopathic medicine and retreat participants widely agreed that OOA should play a vital role shaping the next generation of osteopathic leaders. Conversations explored a variety of ways the association could develop structured mentorship programs that connect students, residents, and physicians at every career stage. To ensure they are perceived as highly valuable, these programs should offer guidance on critical topics such as board exams, research, leadership, and financial management.

Beyond mentorship, discussions also highlighted the need to create stronger community ties through regional volunteering, symposia, →

### Setting Goals for the Future

Retreat participants identified five key focus areas and corresponding goals. For each area, OOA leadership established clear objectives, success metrics, and strategies to guide progress in the coming years:

- Championing Excellence in Osteopathic Medicine and Patient Advocacy
- Synergistic Partnerships
- Operational Excellence and Leadership Development
- Mentorship and Connection
- Education and Research



and local academies. Emphasis was placed on the critical value of intergenerational learning and peer mentoring—not only as tools to reduce burnout and enhance career development but also as a way to introduce students early to OOA's lasting impact. By engaging students at the beginning of their professional journey, the association can deepen its impact and cultivate the next generation of osteopathic leaders.

### Education and Professional Development

Another common theme voiced during the retreat was the crucial role that students and residents play in OOA's future. Participants stressed the need to expand engagement by increasing leadership and mentorship opportunities, integrating students and residents into OOA committees and task forces, and strengthening connections through networking events and conferences.

In a parallel effort to support professional growth at every stage, retreat participants also emphasized the need to reinforce OOA's role as a leader in osteopathic education. Expanding access to high-quality continuing medical education (CME), research opportunities, and professional development, as well as expanded hands-on training in osteopathic manipulative medicine, leadership development programs, and specialty-focused workshops will further establish OOA as a trusted educational resource.

In addition, the importance of research collaboration was identified as a priority. Of notable import is the need to build partnerships with institutions and to increase OOA members' visibility at national symposia. Active engagement in research initiatives not only advance osteopathic medicine as a whole, but they also position OOA as a leading voice in medical innovation and professional development.

### Strengthening Organizational Identity and Governance

As conversations shifted toward OOA's internal structure, participants explored ways to enhance governance, improve operational efficiency, and ensure long-term sustainability. There was widespread agreement about the need to foster a member-centric model with a strong emphasis on making membership more accessible to all, while also emphasizing its value through mentorship, advocacy, and professional development. Clear communication about OOA's benefits across all demographics was identified as fundamental to increasing engagement and securing long-term participation. A stronger digital presence and expanded social media footprint were both pinpointed as vital steps to engaging members, fostering year-round connections, and enhancing outreach, professional networking, and continuous engagement.

Attendees further emphasized the importance of forging strong, mutually beneficial strategic partnerships with local, state, and national organizations to expand OOA's reach, advance the impact of osteopathic medicine, and foster greater collaboration within the healthcare community.

Shifting the focus inward, the retreat dialogue also examined the need for streamlined operations to improve financial stability and organizational efficiency. Among the topics covered in this regard were discussions about how and when to consider a redefined governance structure and an interest in exploring the possibility of consolidating districts under a unified framework to create a more cohesive and strategic approach.

### Engaging Through Events and Connection

Beyond governance and membership initiatives, the retreat highlighted the vital role of events in fostering a strong and connected osteopathic community. Participants recognized that OOA's annual symposium and other gatherings provide more than just professional development—they create a sense of belonging, celebrate achievements, and inspire lasting commitment to the organization. However, there was consensus among participants that the association could be doing even more, with expanded networking and volunteer opportunities surfacing as important priorities. Because members benefit not only from professional connections but also from meaningful ways to give back to their communities and support colleagues at every career stage, expanding



### A Unified Vision for the Future

During its February 2025 Board meeting, OOA leadership formally voted to adopt updated vision and mission statements that reflect the association's priorities and long-term goals. This decision marks a commitment to strengthening OOA's role in advocacy, education, and community engagement while ensuring its values align with the evolving needs of osteopathic physicians across Ohio.

**Mission:** Supporting Ohio's osteopathic physicians and students through advocacy, collaboration, education, and research.

**Vision:** Optimizing patient health through the advancement of osteopathic medicine.

these efforts will create deeper relationships and enhance the association's influence.

Participants also stressed the need to make these—and all future OOA events and programming—more inclusive and designed to appeal to a broader range of members. To attract and retain a diverse membership, especially students and residents, discussions emphasized the need to incorporate enjoyable, low-pressure activities into OOA's calendar of events. By making engagement accessible and fun, the association will ensure that members feel welcomed and motivated to stay involved for years to come.

### Cultivating a Strong, Inclusive Osteopathic Community

The strategic planning retreat reaffirmed OOA's commitment to leading in advocacy, research, and education, and underscored leadership's continued focus on long-term organizational sustainability. To that end, strategic succession planning, robust recruitment efforts, and strong member retention were identified as significant priorities, now and into the future. Moreover, OOA's robust roster of actively engaged retired members were acknowledged as a valuable resource who are well-prepared to play a vital role in mentoring and guiding future generations of osteopathic professionals.

To support these goals, OOA also recognizes the need to expand its influence beyond its membership. By increasing public awareness and appreciation for osteopathic medicine, OOA would broaden its influence, share its achievements with external stakeholders, and position itself as a premier force in the field.

The 2024 strategic planning retreat set a bold course for OOA's future, reinforcing its commitment to growth, advocacy, and excellence. With a clear vision and actionable goals, the organization stands ready to elevate osteopathic medicine, strengthen its community, and expand its influence on healthcare policy and education. Members and stakeholders are encouraged to engage in these initiatives, ensuring a strong and sustainable future for the profession. ■

# VOCCME Expands Access to CME for Ohio's Osteopathic Physicians

The Ohio Osteopathic Association (OOA) has announced its continued partnership with VOCCME, a virtual, on-demand continuing medical education (CME) program designed to offer physicians a flexible and customizable way to fulfill their educational requirements. Now in its fifth year, the program has grown significantly, serving more than 2,000 physicians across nearly every state. With 98 percent of participants recommending the program to their colleagues, VOCCME has become a trusted resource for high-quality CME.

The 2025 VOCCME, which launched on February 14 and runs through June 30, will offer 48 one-credit programs covering a wide range of clinical and professional development topics. The program allows registrants to select from these sessions to tailor their CME experience to their own interests and practice needs. Physicians can purchase anywhere from eight to 48 credits in increments of eight, with many opting for the full 48-credit package in previous years.

A key advantage of the program is its ability to provide national expertise through a diverse roster of speakers while maintaining accessibility and affordability. Participants can complete the courses at their own pace over the course of more than four months, eliminating the need for travel or time away from their practice. OOA members also benefit from discounted registration rates, making the program an even more cost-effective option for fulfilling CME requirements.

By collaborating with multiple state osteopathic associations, OOA has helped expand the scope and reach of the VOCCME initiative while also sharing resources and costs. The partnership provides significant financial benefits, generating revenue that helps fund strategic initiatives for the association. Additionally, the ability to offer such a broad selection of courses from a national speaker network strengthens the quality and variety of education available to Ohio's osteopathic physicians.

"With the increasing demands on physicians' time and the rising costs of travel, VOCCME offers an essential solution for osteopathic physicians who need convenient, high-quality CME options," said OOA Executive Director Heidi A. Weber, MBA, CAE. "This program ensures that our members have access to diverse educational opportunities while also supporting the long-term mission of the OOA."

Registration for the 2025 VOCCME is now open. The program will run from February 14 through June 30, allowing physicians ample time to complete their selected coursework. More information and registration details are available at [www.voccme.org](http://www.voccme.org). ■

## VOCCME

### FEATURED OHIO SPEAKERS



**Robert W. Hostoffer, DO**

*Assessment and Management of Common Pediatric Emergencies*  
Track 2.8



**Jason R. Jackson, DO, FACOP, FAAP**

*The Multi-Disciplinary Approach to Complex Fetal Parent-Patient Dyad*  
Track 3.11



**Susan M. Ratay, DO, MSMEd, ABOM, ABOIM**

*Nutrition Counseling and Obesity Management*  
Track 3.1



**Shannon C. Trotter, DO, FAAD, FAOCD**

*Derm Potpourri*  
Track 2.10





# OHIO OSTEOPATHIC SYMPOSIUM

## Returns with Premier Education and Networking



The Ohio Osteopathic Symposium returns April 10-13, 2025, at the Hilton Columbus at Easton, with a fresh approach designed to enhance networking, engagement, and collaboration. As Ohio's largest osteopathic gathering, the symposium provides four days of premier education, professional development, and meaningful connections.

A collaborative effort between the Ohio Osteopathic Association and the Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine, the symposium has been a cornerstone of osteopathic education since its launch in 2010.

The 2025 Symposium features three dedicated education tracks for physicians, residents, and students on Saturday, April 12. Whether early in training or well into practice, participants will find expert-led sessions covering essential topics in osteopathic medicine, innovative approaches to patient care, and opportunities to earn CME credits.

This year's event has also been redesigned to offer more opportunities for networking and mentorship—giving attendees more ways to connect with peers, mentors, and industry leaders. In addition to expanded connections, the Research Exhibition and Poster Competition will once again highlight innovative work from students and residents, providing an interactive space for learning and collaboration.

“The Symposium planning team is excited about the changes to the conference, which were designed to strike a balance between high-quality education and expanded opportunities for engagement,” said OOA Executive Director Heidi A. Weber, MBA, CAE. “We’re confident that this year’s program not only offers attendees a fantastic chance to gain knowledge and grow professionally, but to also strengthen their ties within the osteopathic community.”

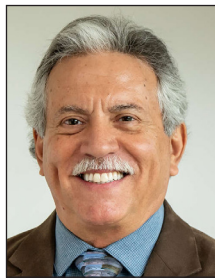
For more details and to register, visit [www.OOS2025.org](http://www.OOS2025.org). ■



# Could Infections Be the Key to Alzheimer's?

2025 J.O. Watson, DO, Memorial Lecturer Dr. Brian Balin, PhD, Shares Groundbreaking Research on New Risk Factors and Treatments

**D**r. Brian J. Balin, PhD, Professor of the Department of Bio-Medical Sciences and the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation Endowed Chair for Aging Research in Honor of Ruth E. Purdy, DO, George O. Faerber, DO, and Peter E. Johnston, DO, at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, will share his pioneering insights into the link between infections and Alzheimer's during the 2025 J.O. Watson, DO, Memorial Lecture at the Ohio Osteopathic Symposium April 12th at the Hilton Columbus at Easton. Dr. Balin, a trailblazer in Alzheimer's research, will be joined by Dr. Graciela Muniz-Terrera, PhD, Professor of Social Medicine and the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation Ralph S. Licklider, DO, Endowed Professor in Health and Aging at the Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine, to present *Perspectives on Infections as Risk Factors for Alzheimer's Disease*.



**Dr. Brian J. Balin**

Sponsored by the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation (OHF), the session will examine how infections, neuroinflammation, and systemic health factors contribute to Alzheimer's progression. The presenters will also discuss the broader implications of these findings for early diagnosis, intervention, and treatment strategies—insights that could reshape how physicians approach Alzheimer's and other aging-related diseases.

Dr. Balin's expertise in neuropathology and infectious disease research and Dr. Muniz-Terrera's work in aging and biostatistics offer a comprehensive look at how these factors may contribute to neurodegeneration. Their findings reinforce

## ***Honoring the Legacy of J.O. Watson, DO***

The J.O. Watson, DO, Memorial Lecture, presented annually at the Ohio Osteopathic Symposium, is among the most prestigious lectureships in osteopathic medicine. Named for James O. Watson, DO, a founding physician of Doctors Hospital (Columbus, Ohio) and tireless advocate for the profession, the lecture celebrates individuals whose work has profoundly impacted healthcare.

In 2025, Drs. Brian Balin and Graciela Muniz-Terrera will uphold this tradition, bridging cutting-edge Alzheimer's research with osteopathic principles to expand the frontiers of medical knowledge.

osteopathic principles, emphasizing whole-body health and addressing root causes rather than just symptoms.

## ***Leading the Charge in Neurodegenerative Research***

Dr. Balin has dedicated his career to understanding neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's, and the factors that contribute to their onset and progression. As Professor of Neuroscience and Neuropathology and Director of the Center for Chronic Disorders of Aging at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM), Dr. Balin teaches and engages with students through lectures, case presentations, and laboratory sessions on topics such as neuroanatomy, neuropathology, neurodegeneration, general pathology, and the molecular mechanisms underlying cancer and infectious disease. →

His work challenges conventional approaches to diagnosing and treating Alzheimer's, offering fresh perspectives that could transform patient care. By identifying a strong correlation between infections, specifically Chlamydia pneumoniae, and Alzheimer's, he has demonstrated how pathogens can trigger neuroinflammation, beta-amyloid accumulation, and neurodegeneration.

These findings have inspired new approaches for diagnosing, preventing, and potentially treating Alzheimer's, shifting the paradigm from a purely genetic and lifestyle-driven model to one that includes infectious disease as a contributing factor. This groundbreaking research highlights the critical intersection of osteopathic principles and cutting-edge science, emphasizing a whole-body approach to disease prevention and management.

#### **A Collaborative Approach to Brain Health**

An expert in biostatistics and dementia research, Dr. Muniz-Terrera has previously held senior positions at the University of Edinburgh, where she led efforts in the European Prevention of Alzheimer's Dementia (EPAD) study.



**Dr. Graciela Muniz-Terrera**

Her research focuses on:

- Long-term trends in brain health and cognitive aging.
- Epidemiological factors influencing Alzheimer's risk over a lifetime.
- The intersection of social, lifestyle, and biological determinants of neurodegeneration.

Dr. Muniz-Terrera's work complements Dr. Balin's research by offering a broader view of how external factors impact cognitive decline. This reinforces the need for a multidisciplinary approach to Alzheimer's prevention and treatment.

#### **Far-Reaching Impacts on Aging and Disease**

Dr. Balin's work presents a transformative shift in how Alzheimer's is understood, with potential impacts extending to other aging-related diseases, including:

- New prevention and treatment frameworks targeting infections and neuroinflammation rather than focusing solely on genetic risk factors.
- Potential applications for addressing other aging-related health challenges, including cardiovascular



The Foundation is pleased to welcome Drs. Balin and Muniz-Terrera who will present the 2025 J.O. Watson, DO, Memorial Lecture honoring one of the founders of Doctors Hospital. Dr. Watson, an accomplished surgeon and medical educator, was a passionate advocate for innovative osteopathic medicine and research like this groundbreaking work that is changing the paradigm in which Alzheimer's is studied, diagnosed, and ultimately treated.



- Terri Donlin Huesman, President and CEO of the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation

disease, diabetes, and neurodegenerative disorders commonly linked to chronic inflammation.

- An integrative approach that aligns with osteopathic medicine's focus on whole-body health, urging physicians to consider infection a key risk factor for cognitive decline.

His research challenges osteopathic physicians to take a more comprehensive approach to Alzheimer's risk assessment, integrating scientific advancements with holistic patient care to develop more effective treatment and prevention strategies.

#### **Shaping the Future of Osteopathic Medicine**

The Ohio Osteopathic Symposium remains committed to advancing innovative, high-impact medical education. This year's J.O. Watson, DO, Memorial Lecture exemplifies that mission, offering a rare opportunity to engage with cutting-edge research that could change the trajectory of Alzheimer's treatment and prevention. Don't miss this exclusive opportunity to hear from leading experts reshaping how Alzheimer's is understood, diagnosed, and treated.

Join us at the 2025 Ohio Osteopathic Symposium to explore this critical research, engage with top minds, and gain insights that could transform patient care.

To see the full agenda of CME lectures and register to attend, visit [www.oos2025.org](http://www.oos2025.org). ■



The OOA works with many Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine (OU-HCOM) students, particularly Student Government Association (SGA) leadership. SGA presidents from each campus—Athens, Cleveland, and Dublin—are invited to OOA Board meetings and are allotted time on the agenda to report on campus activities. These students also represent the OOA at the AOA House of Delegates meeting.

## ATHENS



### AMISHA SAINI

2024-2025 SGA President  
*Athens Campus*

As I reflect on the 2024-2025 academic year on our Athens campus, it's incredible to see how much our students, faculty, and staff have accomplished in just over half a year. I am deeply grateful to lead and represent such hardworking and dedicated students who embody the holistic pillars of health and wellness every day. Their commitment to these values elevates not only their personal growth but also their contributions to the community. This year has been filled with remarkable growth and resilience, both on campus and within the Athens community.

A standout initiative has been the partnership between Ohio Women in Medicine (OWIM) and a local elementary school. Over the past two years, OWIM has engaged youth groups in important conversations about body image, STEM careers, and other key topics. This program has sparked curiosity and excitement about science and medicine, motivating young minds to explore these fields and pursue their futures with confidence.

Another impactful effort is Operation Health Literacy, which continues to educate incarcerated populations on health topics like depression, anxiety, addiction, and diabetes. The program has been exceptionally well-received, with many participants eager to deepen their knowledge in preparation for reintegration into society. This initiative emphasizes the importance of health education for all, regardless of background, and helps break down barriers to healthcare access.

In addition to these community outreach efforts, we celebrated the

success of the OU-HCOM Golf Charity, organized by OMS-II's Grant Johnson and Andrew Devine. This event raised funds for both Dean Schrinier and the American Cancer Society, bringing together students and faculty for a day of fun and philanthropy. It was a shining example of our students' leadership and commitment to causes that benefit both our immediate and broader community.

I'd like to also highlight the collaboration between the Association of Women Surgeons and the Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association in co-hosting the National Marrow Donor Program Cheek Swab Event back in November. This event provided an opportunity for students and community members to join the national registry and potentially save lives.

We also celebrate the achievement of Sumedha Kappagantula, OMS-II, who presented her research at the 2024 American College of Osteopathic Internists (ACOI) conference. Her project, 3D Bioprinting of a Microphysiological Model of Breast Cancer, earned her second place in the student original research competition. Sumedha's success highlights the innovative work being done by our students in osteopathic medicine, and I look forward to more student-driven innovation with the completion of our new translational research building.

On a lighter note, we've seen the rise of our first-ever interest group, the Running Club, started by OMS-II Alexis Neri, which brings together first- and second-year medical students for regular runs. This group fosters connections, promotes physical wellness, and provides a fun way for students to de-stress. Executive Dean Johnson has even joined the students for a run or two, reinforcing the importance of balance and wellness in our busy lives.

Finally, our student-led Care Clinic continues to provide free primary care to those in need, advancing both student education and community service. We've already logged 7,623.9 volunteer hours on the Athens campus, surpassing this time last year, which reflects our students' growing engagement in community service. This year has been a true reflection of the passion, resilience, and leadership of our OU-HCOM community. As I look ahead, I am excited about the upcoming DO Day of Service and the start of clinical rotations. I cannot wait to see what the future holds. →

# CLEVELAND



## MURATHAN KAHYAOGLU

2024-2025 SGA President  
*Cleveland Campus*

The 2024-2025 academic year at OU-HCOM Cleveland campus was marked by achievements in student advocacy, community outreach, and advancing the osteopathic profession. As Student Government Association President, I am proud to report on the tireless efforts of our student leaders in enhancing the medical school experience and serving the greater Cleveland area.

The Cleveland SGA advocated for our student body at multiple levels. We collaborated with campus administration to address concerns, from clarifying insurance coverage to enhancing mentorship opportunities. I represented the Ohio Osteopathic Association at the AOA House of Delegates, co-authoring and helping pass a resolution on the safety of healthcare workers in conflict areas.

OU-HCOM Cleveland students demonstrated an unwavering commitment to serving our local community. Doctors on the Streets (DOTS) provided free healthcare to unhoused individuals. The Lifestyle Medicine Club expanded their community garden with Cleveland Clinic South Pointe, supplying fresh produce to the hospital's food pantry. Our Pediatrics Club held their annual Trunk or Treat event, engaging over 800 children and bringing the Warrensville Heights community together.

The SGA Director of Community Outreach provided students with

engagement opportunities through the TOUCH Newsletter. They are organizing Cleveland's DO Day of Service and a school supply drive with the Pediatrics Club. The Student National Medical Association (SNMA) and SGA Inclusion Officer led efforts to promote diversity through the Aspiring D.O.ctors program, outreach of our Early Assurance Program to all high schools, a pre-exam study hall, a scholarship fundraiser, and student interview panels.

Our SGA Director of Wellness organized events to support mental health and foster community. Students raised over \$3,000 for Doctors Without Borders. The Cleveland Academy of Osteopathic Medicine hosted its annual "A Conversation with Women in Medicine" to connect with mentors and celebrated its 60th anniversary with a conference featuring student research presentations.

A \$70 million gift from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation to OU-HCOM will expand scholarships and fund research. This partnership launches Vision 2035 to minimize student debt and expand translational research.

As we get ready to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the OU-HCOM Cleveland campus, I am filled with gratitude for the dedication of our SGA officers and the entire Cleveland student body. Their commitment to serving our community, advocating for change, and shaping the future of healthcare has been truly inspirational. This milestone year has provided an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come as a campus and the immeasurable impact our students and alumni have had on the communities we serve. As we look ahead, I am confident that the groundwork laid this year and the transformative partnerships forged will have a lasting positive impact on our campus, our profession, and the patients we serve.

To my fellow student leaders and the Cleveland student body, thank you for your hard work, resilience, and unwavering dedication to making a difference. Together, we have accomplished so much, and I know that the future of osteopathic medicine in Northeast Ohio is brighter than ever. As we continue to advocate and innovate, let us never lose sight of our goal: to improve the lives and health of the communities we serve.

# DUBLIN



## JIMMY APPLEGATE

2024-2025 SGA President  
*Dublin Campus*

It is awe-inspiring to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine's (OU-HCOM) Dublin campus! We kicked off this milestone year in August with a celebratory campus picnic attended by university, college, and local partners, as well as the Class of 2028 Dublin cohort. The evening culminated in the dedication of three rose bushes honoring our only campus dean, Dr. Bill Burke, DO '88. The rose bushes symbolize "380 blooms," representing the 380 graduates of the Dublin campus since its inaugural class of 2018.

Another decade-long achievement is the Dublin Medical Academy, a weeklong program for rising high school seniors that immerses participants in "a day in the life" of a medical student. Over its 10 years, the program has hosted 500 students from 106 Ohio high schools, with eight alumni matriculating to OU-HCOM. Best of all, this life-changing experience is offered free of charge to all participants.

This year, we were proud to launch BeCOMe U, a groundbreaking

pathway program created by our admissions team. BeCOMe U engages middle school students from underrepresented populations in grades 7 and 8 through regular Saturday sessions held on Dublin's campus and at OhioHealth's Doctors Hospital.

Our Emergency Medicine Club is also preparing for one of our largest student-led events—its 9th annual "Disaster Day." This hands-on event trains students in disaster preparedness by teaching them how to approach, manage, and coordinate mass casualty triage through a combination of lectures and active simulations.

The Student Government Association (SGA) has been hard at work completing initiatives and advocating for the Dublin student body. Notable projects include assisting with the development of a new clinic in the Hilltop area, establishing a calming "Reboot Room" on campus, and laying the groundwork for a mentorship program within HCOM, which we hope to launch for future classes. On the advocacy front, our SGA Vice President and I virtually attended AACOM Advocacy Day, uniting with other campuses to ensure a strong, unified presence for HCOM. Our SGA VP also plans to represent HCOM at DO Day on the Hill in March.

Lastly, I want to express immense pride in our students and deep appreciation for our administration. The 2024-2025 academic year brought curriculum changes aimed at reducing stress and decompressing schedules. Students have embraced these changes, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. We are grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback, and we commend our administration, faculty, and staff for advocating on our behalf and actively collaborating with student leaders to resolve challenges, big or small.

As I reflect on all that we've accomplished this year, I am excited for the future of OU-HCOM, its students, and the Dublin campus. Here's to the next decade of growth and achievement! ■

# 135th General Assembly Ends with Flurry of Activity

By Danny Hurley  
Capitol Consulting Group

Lawmakers worked well past midnight on December 18th to wrap up work for the year, enacting several notable pieces of legislation to end a tumultuous two-year legislative session. The 135th General Assembly was punctuated by infighting amongst Republicans and enactment of several controversial pieces of legislation, most notably House Bill 68 (Gender-Affirming Care). The 136th General Assembly will be sworn in on January 6th and will immediately begin work on Governor Mike DeWine's final two-year operating budget proposal. For now, we will unpack the post-election, *Lame Duck* session that concluded in December.

The Ohio General Assembly passed a pair of bills to support children: House Bill 5 (Adoption Modernization), sponsored by State Representatives Sharon Ray (R-Wadsworth) and Rachel Baker (D-Cincinnati), and House Bill 7 (Strong Foundations Act), sponsored by State Representatives Andrea White (R-Kettering) and Latyna Humphrey (D-Columbus). HB 5 is a comprehensive update to Ohio's adoption laws that enjoyed support from adoption agencies and child welfare advocates. HB 7 began its legislative journey as a broad measure to address infant mortality and early childhood development, though many of its provisions were removed prior to final enactment and are expected to resurface in next year's budget debate. HB 7 still contains several positive measures including a requirement that Ohio Medicaid study reimbursement for programs to support infant vitality, a streamlining of Help Me Grow intake and referral systems, a mandate that Ohio Medicaid expand coverage to include early childhood mental health services, and a new program under the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to provide information to new parents on evidence-based parental education programs.

Lawmakers also passed House Bill 256 (Organ Donation), sponsored by State Representatives Kevin Miller (R-Newark) and Rodney Creech (R-West Alexandria), House Bill 70 (School OTC Drug Policy), sponsored by State Representatives Jennifer Gross (R-West Chester) and Sarah Fowler Arthur (R-Ashtabula), and Senate Bill 109 (Sex Offenses – Medical Professionals), sponsored by State Senator Bob Hackett (R-London). Lastly, House Bill 156 (Pediatric Hearing Aid Coverage), sponsored by State Representative Casey Weinstein (D-Hudson) was added to House Bill 315 in a last-minute conference committee. Dubbed Madeline's Law, this law will require insurance coverage of hearing aids for children.

The Ohio Senate began the *Lame Duck* session by passing Senate Bill 104, which was heavily amended by the Ohio House of Representatives this summer to include language requiring transgender children and adults to only use restrooms, locker rooms, and similar facilities that correspond to their gender assigned at birth. SB 104 began its journey as a noncontroversial bill sponsored by State Senator Jerry Cirino (R-Kirtland) to modify the College Credit Plus program. Lawmakers also passed House Bill 8 (Parental Bill of Rights), sponsored by State Representatives DJ Swearingen (R-Huron) and Sara Carruthers (R-Hamilton). The bill includes language similar to Florida's 'Don't Say Gay' law as well as escalated reporting requirements for school personnel that could result in children being 'outed' for being transgender without appropriate support.



The Ohio General Assembly also wrapped up work on House Bill 236 (Never Alone Act), sponsored by State Representatives Beth Lear (R-Galena) and Melanie Miller (R-Ashland). This legislation seeks to address visitation when patients are in a congregate care setting during a healthcare emergency. The bill is the result of tragic stories of patients not being able to see loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lawmakers also added some notable items to the conference report for House Bill 315. The first is House Bill 49 (Hospital Price Transparency), sponsored by State Representatives Tim Barhorst (R-For Loramie) and Ron Ferguson (R-Wintersville); these provisions largely mirror existing CMS requirements for hospitals. The legislature also added a handful of provisions from House Bill 73 (Off-Label Prescribing), sponsored by State Representative Jennifer Gross (R-West Chester). While HB 73 faced opposition from several healthcare organizations, the items added to HB 315 are largely noncontroversial except for a provision prohibiting licensure boards from disciplining licensees for promoting medically and scientifically inaccurate information. Governor DeWine is expected to veto this specific provision.

## Previewing the 136th General Assembly

Republicans retain supermajorities in the Ohio House of Representatives and Ohio Senate despite Democrats gaining a handful of seats in the November Election. Republicans control 65 of 99 Ohio House seats and 24 of 33 Ohio Senate seats. We should note that State Senator Terry Johnson, DO (R-McDermott), a champion of Osteopathic Medicine, will be term-limited at the end of the 136th. Two other lawmakers, State Representative Kevin Miller (R-Newark) and incoming State Representative Tristian Rader (D-Lakewood), are the spouses of Osteopathic Physicians. Additionally, several lawmakers are MD's, nurses, or have other vital health care experience.

Lawmakers swore in on January 7th and immediately begin work on a new, two-year state operating budget. This is Governor DeWine's final budget proposal, and he is expected to continue seeking investments in child health and wellness and supporting a robust Medicaid program. OOA will be looking for opportunities to increase funding for physician education and boost Medicaid reimbursement. Unlike previous budgets, which were bolstered by strong returns on state taxes and COVID relief funding, this budget will be more constrained.

The General Assembly will also consider bills related to prescription drug access, scope of practice for advanced practice providers, physician practice issues, such as prior authorization and non-compete clauses, and public health initiatives to address tanning bed use by minors, high insulin costs, and vaccine policy. We anticipate having several bills and initiatives to support, and likely some legislation that we and other health care groups will need to oppose.

Lastly, the start of the 136th General Assembly brought to a close a contentious battle for Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives. Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima) bested State Representative Tim Barhorst (R-Fort Loramie) for the post. Huffman is term-limited and returning to the House. The Speaker is a critical position as they set the floor calendar, decide on committee chairmanships, and generally guide policymaking in the lower chamber. ■



# Managing Wealth and Relationships: A Holistic Approach

For over a decade, River Tree Wealth Management has worked closely with OOA and OOF, supporting the goal of advocating for the osteopathic profession, both at the organizational level and for individual members. With a deep and long-standing relationship with the Association, the Foundation, and the Board, River Tree remains committed to supporting the organization and its members.

At River Tree Wealth Management, the goal is simple: help clients build and transfer wealth through meaningful relationships. With a focus on understanding people where they are in their financial journey, the team emphasizes the importance of personal connections in wealth management. This approach is rooted in their core values, aiming to create a relaxed, learning-focused environment for serious financial conversations.

Shawn Phelps, MBA, founder and private wealth advisor, explains, “Growing a business involves learning from mistakes, and that can be discouraging if the mood isn’t light.” By creating an atmosphere where clients feel comfortable discussing topics like legacy and taxes, River Tree helps individuals gain clarity and confidence in their financial decisions.



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WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Whether working with foundations, business owners, affluent individuals, or families, River Tree focuses on tailoring strategies to each client’s unique needs. “We want to be a biographer of our clients’ lives,” says Phelps. “Initial meetings are focused on understanding their goals, experiences, and how finances fit into their businesses, life, and legacy.” This personal touch ensures that wealth is allocated based on what truly motivates each client and the goals they want to achieve.

As co-founder and private wealth advisor Brandee Wyzlic, B.S., RICP®, adds, “Wealth management and retirement planning is a relationship business.” Building trust through deep dialogue, River Tree partners with clients’ tax and legal advisors to help navigate their financial journey. This collaborative approach ensures that decisions are made with all aspects of clients’ lives in mind.

The team also draws inspiration from their location on the banks of the Olentangy

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River, using the river as a metaphor for wealth management. “Sometimes you act as a river, letting capital flow into causes and people you care about,” says Phelps. “Other times, you act as a reservoir, holding assets and stocking up for future growth.” This adaptability helps to ensure that wealth is managed effectively in both periods of giving and saving.

With a holistic approach to wealth, relationships, and legacy, River Tree helps clients navigate their financial journey with confidence and clarity. ■

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