

Remarks of Caroline A. Troise, MD

2010 DR. HERBERT RAKATANSKY AWARD RECIPIENT

It is a great honor to receive an award named for a physician so respected and beloved in our community. Thank you.

I have truly been blessed over the past 30 years being a member of this community.

Starting with my residency at Rhode Island Hospital, I have been surrounded by wonderful role models who have taught me the difference between patient care and caring for patients.

As William Osler stated, "It is more important to know what sort of patient has the disease, than what sort of disease the patient has."

It is often easy to lose sight of this in our office practices today. We can all attest to the enormous changes in the practice of medicine that have occurred over the past 10 years.

We have had the birth of the hos-

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—William Osler

pitalist system, the adoption of the electronic medical record, the devaluation of primary care doctors and the exodus of many medical providers from this state.

In October 1999, after a typical day at the office, I walked into a corner building on Broad Street for the first time to do a volunteer session for the Rhode Island Free Clinic. There were a dozen patients seated in folding chairs against one wall. They had already been waiting hours for a chance to receive medical care. They had no medical insurance.

I was astounded by the numbers of patients with untreated hypertension and diabetes, and overwhelmed by

their gratitude at what little we were able to provide at that time.

In the past 10 years, there have been some changes at the Free Clinic as well. We have moved up the street to a state-of-the-art facility, complete with electronic medical record. In the past year, we also now have a pharmacy and are able to dispense generic medications to our patients at no cost to them.

Some things have not changed, however.

We are still fortunate to have the dedicated volunteers and staff who work day after day to deliver quality medical care to these uninsured patients. I am not just referring to the workers at our Broad Street location. What is so gratifying is the generosity of the whole community to keep our facility going. The hospitals, universities, drug companies, state Health Department, medical insurance companies, local businesses, private citizens, students, all have contributed to keeping the free clinic in existence, which has been a challenge in these difficult financial times.

I am especially indebted to the medical community for their volunteerism in meeting the medical needs of our patients. We have been able to provide excellent primary and specialty care in our facility as well as in our virtual network, where doctors have agreed to see our patients in their own offices.

What also has not changed is the growing number of uninsured patients needing basic medical care and the continued shortage of primary care physicians to care for them. This past month over 70 patients showed up for our new patient lottery and only 13 were able to be accepted.

We desperately need primary care doctors. Last week, the free clinic received \$99,000 in federal grants to expand our services to provide medical care for more uninsured patients.

To me, a night at the Free Clinic is a reminder of what it means to be a doctor and why I went to medical school in the first place.



Without primary care doctors, the full potential of this money cannot be realized.

To me, a night at the Free Clinic is a reminder of what it means to be a doctor and why I went to medical school in the first place. One does not have to travel to a third world country to care for the needy. Please consider joining our family of providers.

I would like to close by thanking my family, friends and colleagues for supporting my activities over the years.

Thank you for this tremendous honor. I will do my best to remain worthy of it. ❖