# Thank You for the Opportunity

*“The reward of a thing well done is having done it.”*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

As I entered the final month of my APA Presidency, someone asked me how I would like this year to be remembered. I responded that I wanted this time to be seen as “the year that the APA got its mojo going.” This was the year that we confronted the need for change, and didn’t shrink from the challenge. Instead we addressed and embraced it with energy, creativity and action, in ways that advanced psychiatry scientifically, socially and politically, and enabled it to better help patients and fulfill its mission.

When I was elected as APA president, I believed my role was to set a clear vision, articulate expectations, engage talented colleagues in the work at hand – and then communicate with our members about what we were seeking to achieve and why. I wanted to use all of the power and influence of the APA to speak up and stick up for our profession and our patients.

As I prepare to give up this important leadership role in American Psychiatry, I want to thank the APA members for giving me this opportunity. I can reasonably hope that we have been at least partially successful in tackling the pressing issues that psychiatry faces, and in making the APA a better and more effective organization. I couldn’t have asked for a better or more dedicated team of individuals who helped me to move the APA forward this past year.

The year began with the official launch of the DSM-5. After a tumultuous gestation and overcoming numerous challenges, the fifth edition of the APA’s diagnostic manual has proved a great success as reflected by generally favorable reviews, impressive sales and gratifying clinical feedback.

At the same time health care reform legislation has impacted psychiatry along with every other health care discipline and service. To advise and guide the APA through this transformative process, we convened a Health Care Reform Advisory Committee (Chaired by Howard Goldman), and recruited the leading experts (from outside the APA) in the country on health policy and economy as members. Because any policy or legislative initiatives that we sought to pursue would require a political and communications strategy, we recruited Patrick Kennedy as a special consultant to the APA.

This group has worked hand and glove with APA staff to influence legislation and protect the interests of our profession and patients in various ways, including in the Affordable Care Act, the Final Rule of the Mental Health Parity Bill, reversing the unfavorable action by CMS to restrict the choice of medications in Medicare Part D and in the pending bills introduced by Senators Debbie Stabenow and Roy Blunt (Excellence in Mental Health Act) and Representative Tim Murphy (Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act).

Mindful of the continuing stigma associated with mental illness and psychiatric treatment, we retained an outside consultant agency (Porter Novelli) to review the APA’s communications capabilities, needs and opportunities. Based on their report, we are now moving forward with an initiative to enact a sophisticated and proactive communications plan that will be directed both internally to APA members and externally to the media, mental health stakeholder groups and the general public.

APA membership has also been an all-important priority in the past year, and with a specific emphasis on the needs of our members in training and early career, as well as ensuring gender, racial and ethnic diversity in the APA membership, leadership and governance positions. Towards these ends, a BOT Workgroup on how to make the APA more relevant to younger members, co-chaired by Carolyn Rodriguez and Jonathan Amiel, provided an outstanding report and set of recommendations, including the proposal for a staff appointment for a Chief Membership and RFM-ECP Officer. In addition, Maria Oquendo was asked to chair an Assembly-BOT Workgroup on APA diversity which will deliver its report at the July BOT meeting

We have also appointed a committee (co-chaired by Grayson Norquist and John Rush) to carry out a comprehensive review of the APA’s Departments of Research and Quality Improvement and advise the APA Board and CEO on what are the most critical functions that will serve the organization and its members in this period of great change and thereafter.

Finally, in the tradition of passing the baton, knowing that Jay Scully would be stepping down after the completion of more than a decade of service as APA CEO and Medical director, a search for a successor was orchestrated, and Saul Levin appointed as our new CEO/MD. I am happy to say that the transition has been very successful and would like to commend Jay, Saul and the APA Staff for their dedication and professionalism through this process. Saul has hit the ground running and we look forward to his capable leadership and the staff’s continued outstanding performance going forward.

It is an understatement to say that this year has been one of remarkable change in U.S. healthcare. It has also been a year of important changes for the APA – many of which were in response to these larger transformations, and some because of the needs of our own profession. Much of the good fortune that I have enjoyed in leading the APA over the past year is because of the efforts and accomplishments of my immediate predecessors including Dilip Jeste, John Oldham, Carol Bernstein and Alan Schatzberg. No matter how effective one is as President, the one-year term, limits what can be achieved. Consequently, it is important that the baton of leadership be carried continually, by the most capable members of our profession. I am confident that Paul Summergrad and Renee Binder who will follow me, will sustain this trend in effective leadership during their Presidencies. In this context, I encourage each and every member, to consider how they can participate in the APA activities and governance process and to support the most capable candidates.

And go forward we will, with, I hope, great energy, enthusiasm and commitment to our profession, to the work that we do and to the patients that we serve. Personally, I look forward to continuing my participation in the APA as Past President (APA Presidents never die they just recede into the background) and returning to my day job at Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute. In doing so, I want to thank you for the opportunity.