

From the President's Desk

The new-in-practice pathologist

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March 2024—During the 12 years I spent as director of a pathology residency program, one thing I worried about was how to better prepare our residents for their first roles as attending pathologists or laboratory directors. For many pathologists, the transition from always having someone looking over their shoulder to being on their own is very challenging.

There are specific and unique needs for new-in-practice pathologists. All of us go through that experience, and I think we can all relate to the stress of signing out for the first time with your name on the bottom of the report, not having an established peer network at a new job, and feeling like you have to earn credibility among your new colleagues. There's a lot of on-the-job learning that goes into the first few years of practice.

Another element of the new-in-practice experience is embracing emerging technologies. Tools such as digital pathology and AI might not impact pathologists approaching retirement age, but pathologists just starting out will likely need to rely on them for their entire careers.

Fortunately, the CAP has many resources for these pathologists, and our New in Practice Committee is constantly developing new programs to meet their needs. As an example, last year's annual meeting included a couple of panel discussions on topics of particular interest to new-in-practice pathologists, and we expect to do the same again this year.



Dr. Karcher

We also have a new-in-practice pathologists resource page on the CAP website (https://bit.ly/CAP_NiPP). It brings together resources from across the CAP ecosystem to create a one-stop shop for roundtables, podcasts, tips of the week, case studies, and tutorials. Worried about hitting that sign-out button for the first time? There's a whole subpage dedicated to that subject, with handy tips for reviewing tissue samples, handling difficult cases, coding correctly, and much more. The resource page also includes information about how to gain recognition and respect in your early career, how to find guidance when you need it, and how to sharpen your daily practice skills.

Then there's the MyCAP mobile app, which got a significant update last fall with new features that should be particularly helpful for early-career pathologists. Using the app, CAP members can now identify each other through our member directory and connect with other members through our various online member communities to ask questions about career guidance, difficult or interesting cases, or anything else that might benefit from discussion with others. The app also includes FastFive Challenges, which are a quick way to access bite-size educational exercises and earn cost-free CME credits.

The CAP also now hosts a group specifically for fellowship trainees, the Fellowship Forum. This new group allows trainees at this critical point in their career to reach out to each other, develop their peer network, and have a solid

foundation in place when they're ready to join the ranks of new-in-practice pathologists. The forum hosts several roundtables aimed at this group on topics that matter to these trainees.

Our Council on Membership and Professional Development has been working hard to create a mentorship program for younger CAP members. It is now in a pilot phase, and when it rolls out more broadly it will be available to anyone from the last year of residency through the first four years of post-training practice. I'm excited about establishing a program that will help early-career pathologists find the support they need so they can practice with confidence.

My goal for the CAP is to address all of the concerns that new-in-practice pathologists have, and I believe we are well on our way. A number of other initiatives are in the works, and I will offer updates as more resources become available. I want every early-career pathologist to have the same things I've tried to teach my own residents: confidence that you can push that button and finalize a report, the skills required to direct a laboratory, and the ability to know when you don't know something so you can turn to a colleague or the CAP for support and guidance when you need it.

If you're a trainee or new-in-practice pathologist with an idea for how the CAP can help address your needs, I'd love to hear from you.

Dr. Karcher welcomes communication from CAP members. Write to him at president@cap.org.