

From the President's Desk

We are all pathologists

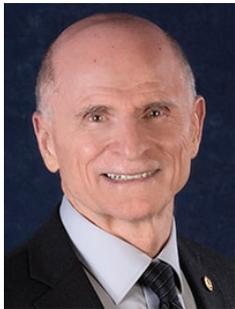
Donald S. Karcher, MD

October 2023—In my long career, I've met a lot of pathologists. The military pathologist. The private practice pathologist who drives 75 miles each way to serve patients at a small rural hospital. The academic pathologist frantically writing a research grant proposal after a full day of clinical service. The lab director struggling to keep up with a rapidly growing specimen volume.

Actually, I haven't just met all of those pathologists — I've *been* all of them too. From my earliest days as a pathologist in training at Brooke Army Medical Center in Texas to my time in private practice to my current role as a professor and immediate past chair of pathology at George Washington University, I have experienced firsthand the great diversity of roles that pathology offers.

It's this perspective that is driving one of my main goals as the incoming president of the CAP: to recognize that we are *all* pathologists, and in doing so, to bring more of us together under the big tent of the College. Whether you work in private practice, academia, a hospital system, a commercial laboratory, the military or government, or any other type of organization, my message is simple: If you're a pathologist, you have a place in the CAP.

Sure, we may practice different subspecialties. And we probably belong to different professional societies. Today there are more than 30 professional organizations for pathologists and nearly 70 different journals focused on our field. No wonder our community sometimes feels fractured into many different segments.



Dr. Karcher

It's time to heal some of those fractures. While there is a valuable role for associations beyond the CAP, there is also value in having one place where all pathologists belong, where we can be united in advocacy for our entire profession and where our collective voice has the greatest power. The CAP is that organization.

We are unique among pathology societies, and we have been since our founding 77 years ago. With some 18,000 members, we are the largest organization of pathologists in the world. One of the CAP's primary missions is to advocate for pathologists. We accomplish this through another uncommon trait—unlike most not-for-profit professional associations, the CAP was formed with 501(c)(6) tax status, which allows us to have a political action committee (PathPAC) and to spend unlimited resources on advocacy. Our Washington, DC, office has a staff of dozens, giving us a real seat at the table whenever and wherever there are legislative, regulatory, or other government discussions pertinent to pathologists. Add to that our work supporting fair payment for pathologists and clinical labs from government and private payers, and the full scope of CAP advocacy comes into focus.

The CAP is where we can all rally as a community to ensure that the interests of pathologists and patients are front and center in these discussions. We advocate for fair payment, for appropriate regulatory oversight, and for other conditions that will allow us to provide the best possible care to our patients.

Like many of you, I belong to other pathology organizations. In fact, I previously served as president of the Association of Pathology Chairs, the organization of academic pathology departments in the U.S. and Canada. But our collective participation in the CAP gives all of us more clout as we seek to preserve our ability to care for patients the way we believe is best for them. This advocacy is arguably more important than ever as we see more and more challenges to our profession, from rural or inner-city areas, where hospitals are closing and pathology practices struggle to survive, to academic pathologists who increasingly feel the pressure to generate more revenue through clinical service.

Over the next two years, I sincerely hope to see more pathologists unite within the CAP, and I aim to promote more effective partnerships between the CAP and other pathology organizations. No matter where we work, we have so much in common. We share the same challenges, we celebrate the same victories, and we bemoan the same defeats. As someone who has walked in the shoes of many types of pathologists, I know in my heart that we are more alike than we are different.

As I begin my CAP presidency, I would also like to take a moment to thank my predecessor, Emily Volk, MD, MBA, for her service. She helped all of us in the CAP navigate through the second half of the pandemic and she has earned our appreciation and celebration. Emily is a true trailblazer, both as the second woman to be elected president of the CAP and as an amazingly effective leader who has accomplished so much for our profession. Thank you, Dr. Volk, for your tireless service and for being a great example to all of us.

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