

From the President's Desk: The CAP for the next generation

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January 2022—Happy New Year!

Most of us start each year with resolutions, fresh budgets, or perhaps yearlong plans. This is often the time we think about the future and the choices we need to make now to achieve those long-term goals.

In that spirit, I've been thinking about how important it is for the CAP to continually engage with and mentor the newest members of our pathology community. Residents and early-career pathologists bring vibrant energy to our ranks, and many of them will eventually contribute to the leadership of the CAP. While we always value the experience and wisdom of our more seasoned fellows, it is essential that we also make space to train up-and-coming leaders.

When I was a resident, I didn't think the CAP was for me. I thought it focused on business and laboratory management, and at the time I was most interested in learning the science and medicine of pathology. I had no idea that the CAP offered wonderful educational resources that would have provided exactly the kind of help I wanted.



Dr. Volk

Other CAP members have told me similar stories: So many people wish they had known about and taken advantage of the excellent resources this organization has to offer earlier in their careers. If I had engaged with the Residents Forum at the start of my career, I would have had an incredible network in place when I was looking for my first job.

Instead, it was after my residency and fellowship, during my first year of practice, that a senior partner, Bruce Jones, MD, invited me to apply for the CAP's Cytopathology Committee. I had no way of knowing then how big an impact that role would have on my career. It was like a passport to the rest of the pathology world, allowing me to meet colleagues in academia, private practice, and independent commercial laboratories. Through that committee position, I was able to advocate for pathologists and the appropriate use of proficiency testing in Washington, DC. That helped me understand the extent of the CAP's advocacy operation and how that interplayed with the regulatory and scientific parts of the organization.

The CAP also gave me valuable skills for my career development. I had the opportunity to go to speaker training and advocacy school, both precursors to what we now know as the Engaged Leadership Academy and Pathologists Leadership Summit. I have had the privilege of advocating for our patients—for patient access, safety, and quality—in the media and in the halls of Congress. That speaker training and those advocacy experiences taught me how to be more effective in front of an audience, how to communicate through the media, and how to engage in new ways with my community.

Participating in the CAP has also opened new doors for me. As my husband and I moved around the country, to be closer to family and to grow in our careers, our connections at the CAP made that process so much easier. I could feel at home in new places because I had this organization in common with other pathologists. The CAP has been the home I carried with me.

I would love to give that same sense of belonging and foundation of helpful resources to every pathologist at the start of his or her career. Our Residents Forum allows people to influence the strategic direction of the CAP, with a direct connection to the Board of Governors. They can also participate on committees and councils as junior members. That's a remarkable opportunity: You get to sit in the room with nationally known experts with whom you can develop relationships that will keep you connected to the whole profession. Residents and early-career pathologists can apply for scholarships through the CAP Foundation to attend the Pathologists Leadership Summit. Residents and fellows can go to "what we fund" on foundation.cap.org to read about the awards under "Leadership Development." The CAP offers our newest pathologists the chance to develop personally and professionally. Through the CAP Foundation, young pathologists can pursue altruistic opportunities such as the See, Test & Treat program. This organization can make your world bigger, just as it did mine.

The entire CAP membership benefits from their participation too. Residents and early-career pathologists bring a youthful perspective and a view of new trends, such as shifting employment models in industry or different skills that employers are looking for. They help us keep in touch with the needs of academic institutions. This information allows us to tailor educational resources to better meet all pathologists' needs, whether they are starting out in this field or more experienced practitioners who are learning new skills.

I ask all of you to help ensure the longevity and vitality of the CAP by reaching out to residents and young staff members and telling them about what a membership in the CAP could mean to them. If you are in a position to offer your time as a mentor to junior CAP members, please take that opportunity. In the future, the whole pathology community will reap the rewards of today's investment when this generation is ready to take on critical leadership roles within the CAP.

Dr. Volk welcomes communication from CAP members. Write to her at president@cap.org.