



As a DO, she is regaining control of how to deliver quality care

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Eight years ago, Shannon L. Goldsmith, DO, realized it was time for a change. After working within a large health system that prioritized workflow efficiency, she discovered her true passion lay in spending more time building meaningful connections with her patients.

“To me, medicine is about more than diagnosing and treating—it’s about understanding the whole person and building relationships that foster trust and healing,” said Dr. Goldsmith.

With this new clarity and focus, Dr. Goldsmith headed to Petal, Mississippi, where she joined the Hattiesburg Clinic’s Petal Family Practice Clinic. Hattiesburg Clinic is a member of the AMA Health System Program, which provides enterprise solutions to equip leadership, physicians and care teams with resources to help drive the future of medicine.

“This was a physician-owned operation, and I knew I’d have more autonomy and more say in how I set up my practice,” said Dr. Goldsmith.

With this new focus on patient care and personal connection, it allowed Dr. Goldsmith to get back in touch with what drove her to medicine.

“This has always been what I wanted to do since I was a little girl. I believe this is my calling,” she said. “My patients are the reason I do this. They’re the reason I go to work every day.”

Along with practicing family medicine, Dr. Goldsmith is an active member in the Mississippi Osteopathic Medical Association and is on the board of directors for the Cigna Health Spring Plan.

Through the medical association, she continues to stay up to date on osteopathic medicine as the field evolves. And through Cigna, she’s become well-versed in the intricacies of Medicare and the business side of health care. This has helped her from an organizational perspective at Hattiesburg Clinic, while also helping her guide patients through these complexities.



Dr. Goldsmith's dedication to her patients, practicing osteopathic medicine and leadership in the field are just some of the reasons Dr. Goldsmith was recently awarded the Active Practice Physician Award by the Mississippi Osteopathic Medical Association. This award recognizes a practicing osteopathic physician in Mississippi who is making a significant impact on health care.

In an interview with the AMA, Dr. Goldsmith discussed what the award means to her and addressed some of the challenges physicians are facing today.

AMA: What does this award mean to you?

Dr. Goldsmith: There are about 1,300 DOs in Mississippi at the moment. So, to be recognized in this way was an honor and humbling.

Any practicing physician these days will tell you that medicine is an extremely hard job. The demands on us keep increasing. A lot of times it feels like the only time you receive any feedback is from people when they're being negative. So, the encouragement and the recognition from this award were just what I needed.

Every practicing physician at some point thinks about walking away from medicine. I don't think any of us can do this job for any period of time without thinking about that. But when you are recognized, it reenergizes you and makes you want to keep going and doing what needs to be done despite all the hurdles in medicine today.

AMA: How has your work at Hattiesburg Clinic's Petal Family Practice Clinic influenced your approach to patient care?

Dr. Goldsmith: Practicing here allows me to continue to take care of patients in the way that I believe is best. And that includes being able to spend time with them. A big part of how I practice is that I am not a quick in and out—I am a talker. I like to listen, and I like to get to know people.

A big thing about family medicine is that you get to establish relationships with patients and their families. You get to be there for the good stuff, such as when they lose weight, or their diabetes is controlled for the first time. You also are with them when you must deliver bad news such as if they have cancer. Going through all the ups and downs with them is extremely rewarding.

AMA: What is one of the most rewarding experiences you've had in family medicine?

Dr. Goldsmith: One very rewarding—but challenging—experience that sticks with me was when the Hattiesburg Clinic set up a cough-and-fever clinic during the COVID-19 public health emergency. We opened a facility to keep anyone with these symptoms separated—especially early on when we didn't fully understand COVID-19. This allowed us to protect the vast majority of our workers and patients,



while still operating our normal outpatient medical facilities.

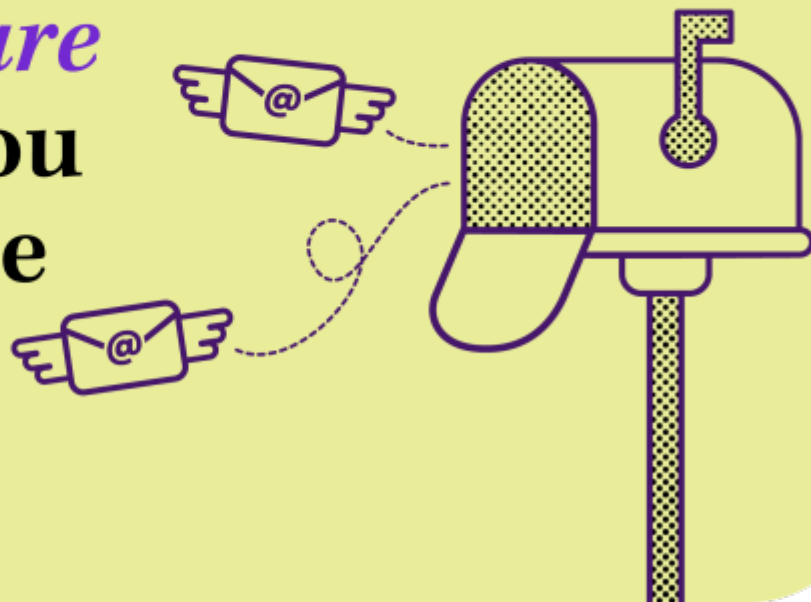
I did a lot of work in the cough-and-fever clinic because I don't have children and I'm otherwise generally healthy. Being able to make a difference in the community during a health crisis by helping patients, while also helping to protect my colleagues, was incredibly rewarding.

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AMA: What are some of the biggest challenges you face in your practice?

Dr. Goldsmith: A big challenge here in Mississippi is the lack of availability for care, particularly for primary care. There's a huge need for more physicians down here—there are way more patients than



there are primary care physicians. I just want to take care of all these people ... but there are only so many patients you can see in a day. The biggest challenge is not being able to provide all the care that's necessary.

Another challenge that I think pretty much any physician would tell you are the increasing insurance issues, documentation issues, prior authorizations, checking the boxes to meet the criteria for Medicare, and so on. Thankfully, our clinic has procedures and policies in place that help. We also have great, supportive staff, which makes a huge difference and makes those challenges bearable.

AMA: What advice would you give aspiring osteopathic physicians?

Dr. Goldsmith: Take the time to learn osteopathic techniques. Pain is a huge complaint amongst patients—probably two-thirds of my patients each day complain of some sort of pain. By no means is it the answer to treat everyone's pain, but it's another tool in your toolbelt to try to help people.

Also, just make sure you really listen and take time with your patients. I've discovered over the years that if you ask the right questions and then really listen, your patients can almost tell you what's wrong with them, when you combine your medical knowledge with what they tell you.

AMA: What insight can you share for women in medicine?

Dr. Goldsmith: There are definitely still a lot of biases and limitations for female physicians. Unfortunately, women still often get treated differently than our male counterparts, from patients, the public and even within clinics. I've been called a nurse a thousand times. I've been called by my first name at the same time the male doctor next to me is not called by his first name.

So, I try not to let those things go. I keep doing my job well and competently, and I try to be respectful while still not letting comments and biases slip by.

It's also so important for us female physicians to really encourage and support each other. Whether it's in trying to get more women into leadership roles or by simply being supportive of each other and trying to build each other up.

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