

Meet APMA President Lawrence Santi, DPM

“Together We Can.”

On Saturday, March 16, Lawrence A. Santi, DPM, was installed as APMA president by his son, APMA Member Joseph Santi, DPM, during the annual House of Delegates meeting in Washington, DC. Dr. Santi, a native New Yorker with four decades of experience as a physician and surgeon, educator, and leader within the profession, comes to the presidency with a focus on unity. For years, he has campaigned at the state and national level on the platform “together we can.” Now, he hopes to bring that philosophy to problems, ranging from conflict between the certifying boards to student recruitment.

Dr. Santi received his bachelor’s degree from St. John’s University in Queens, NY, and completed his DPM degree at the New York College of Podiatric Medicine (NYCPM). He completed residency training at Coney Island Hospital (now South Brooklyn Health) in Brooklyn, NY. “We did medicine, surgery, took call in the ER, and saw a lot of trauma cases,” Dr. Santi said of his training. “I got a lot of education in that one-year residency.”

Dr. Santi has been in private practice in Brooklyn since 1980. He served as president of the New York State Podiatric Medical Association from 2004–2005 and was a delegate to the APMA House of Delegates. He has been involved in the APMA Coding Committee and



Lawrence Santi, DPM

President Santi and his mission to unify the profession?

PM: *What inspired you to become a podiatrist?*

I was pre-med at St. John’s, and we took a trip to a VA hospital and went through the rehab center. It was 1973, and the Vietnam War was in progress, and there were a lot of young soldiers there with loss of limb. I got interested in how to salvage limbs and prevent amputations.

One of the other pre-med students mentioned to me he had just gotten into podiatry school, and I took a tour of NYCPM. I realized it was pretty interesting. Podiatrists were dealing with diabetics with wounds and doing limb salvage. I applied and got in. From that day forward, I’ve never regretted

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other Health Policy and Practice committees where he felt APMA did some of its most meaningful work to support members.

Dr. Santi is chief of podiatric services at New York Community Hospital of Brooklyn, where he also serves as director of the Podiatric Medicine and Surgery Residency program. Read on to learn more about

my choice. Years later, my youngest son came to me and said, “Dad, I think I want to become a podiatrist.” I asked why, and he said, “You work very hard, but every night you come home with a smile on your face.”

PM: *How has service on APMA committees and the Board of*
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Trustees prepared you to lead the association?

My service has taught me to *listen* to the membership—to listen, to think, then respond. I think listening is the most important element of being a leader. Then you act, listen again, and if you didn't have the positive impact you wanted, you go back to the drawing board and try again.

PM: *Tell us a little more about your leadership philosophy.*

My leadership philosophy is centered around the value of belonging to a group. I want to show our members the value of working together. As president of New York State, my motto was, "Together we can." By working together, we can accomplish a lot, even if we are not all on the same page. It's okay to disagree, but when it comes down to it, we all need to come together and work together. Individual members should understand that when they

down to future young physicians. It makes me so proud that there are other residency directors who came out of my program.

Education is dear to my heart, and I think it goes both ways. In my family, I have two young members: my son and my daughter-in-law. I listen to their problems and concerns, and that makes me more attuned to young physicians' needs as a leader. Their problems are our profession's problems.

for prospective students, host a suture workshop at a local university, or share their career at their children's schools, I urge my fellow physicians to get involved.

PM: *What will be the focus of your presidency?*

Unifying the membership and the profession. Getting the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery [ABFAS] and the American

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My son told me early in his career that he didn't want to be political. He's now president of the Kings Division. It's so important for our young physicians to be involved. I would also love to see more residency directors get involved and understand the impor-

Board of Podiatric Medicine [ABPM] together. Showing the membership that the more numbers we have, the stronger we will become to get things accomplished.

PM: *The question of a unified certifying board has been contentious, to say the least. Where are we on that issue from APMA's perspective?*

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have a problem, they can come to their national organizations or state representatives. When we tackle it together, we can help build up the profession.

PM: *You are a residency director. Why is it a priority for you to be involved in training the next generation of podiatric physicians and surgeons?*

I became a residency director in 1994 and have been since. My passion has been for teaching; I love to teach, so it was natural for me to go out and teach residents. The only way our profession can grow is by educating our young members. If they come out the smartest and best, they will pass that

tance of APMA because they are so close to our youngest physicians and their priorities.

PM: *How does that focus on the future of podiatric medicine and surgery translate to your goals for the profession?*

We need to educate new, young minds about careers in podiatric medicine and surgery and be the catalyst for our own growth. APMA is proud to support the Foundation for Podiatric Education as that organization works to grow our diminishing student pool. But this is not an endeavor for one organization alone. Everyone in the profession must play a part. Whether they choose to offer financial support, serve as a mentor

The House of Delegates passed Policy Proposition 2-24, which codified APMA's support for the unification of the two CPME-recognized certifying boards. This proposition also articulated APMA's support for the cessation of the issuance of a CAQ in surgery.

Our specialty boards must work together to advance our profession both medically and surgically. This is important, not only for our membership, but also for the safety and protection of our patients. Unity between the boards will also help make our profession more appealing to students seeking a medical career. The fact that we now have standard three-year residencies, incorporating both medicine and surgery, is proof that unifying this profession is not only possible but works. This is just one of the many goals I hope to accomplish this upcoming year.

The task force established under Budgetary Action Item 3-24, also

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approved at the HOD, will explore pathways to board unification with a broad group of stakeholders.

PM: *In the wake of the retirement of APMA Executive Director and CEO James Christina, DPM, what are your priorities for the search for and transition to a new staff leader at APMA?*

pavement for the profession and show the value of APMA.

PM: *How has membership in APMA created value for you in your career?*

When people ask me why they should belong to APMA, I ask them how their scope of practice is versus how it was 15 years ago. I ask them about billing and coding. I ask

the larger our numbers will be, and the more we can accomplish.

PM: *What would you ask of the profession as you assume the presidency?*

I'd ask that they communicate and work with me. I want to know your problems and your issues. Tell me *now* so that I can do something—not a year later at the HOD. Talk to your liaisons, talk to your component. My biggest pitch is going to be... if you have a problem, communicate it.

Membership recruitment and retention is another important priority as we seek to advance the profession. How do we accomplish that goal? We can through better communication among our membership to ensure their needs are heard and met. That communication works both ways! Together, we can. **PM**

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I think a new CEO will need to be a team player—someone who can work with me, the Board, and the staff. The other thing I expect is for the executive director to be the face of the profession. They'll need to get out there and pound the

about MIPS. Who changed those things for us? I ask who goes to Washington, DC, and advocates for them. I show the value of belonging. I believe every podiatrist needs APMA and should be a member, and the more who see that value,