



Joseph M.P. Zawisza, D.O.
President Elect
Pennsylvania Osteopathic Medical Association (POMA)

Testimony
Public Hearing on Treatment Options in PA for COVID-19
Pennsylvania House Health Committee
September 30, 2020

Good morning Chairwoman Rapp, Chairman Frankel and members of the House Health Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony before you this morning on the treatment options for patients with COVID-19. My name is Joe Zawisza, Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine. I am born, raised, educated, currently live and practice medicine in a rural primary care setting in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. I am a part of a small group practice of three primary care physicians who collectively see approximately 3,500 patients per year. I trained in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at Geisinger.

I am not a famed infectious disease expert, nor am I on the front lines of developing a vaccine, but in many ways, I am just as important. I see over 1,000 patients a year in rural Pennsylvania. And I can tell you from my experience, many patients over the past 8 months have come to my office confused and worried because of something they read or saw on the internet, Facebook and/or one of the news channels, etc. These outlets have told my patients what they should take or be doing that will help with preventing or treating COVID-19. Some of them are good, but many of the concerns expressed by my patients are not supported by scientific evidence.

What I tell them is what I will share with you this morning, which is to date, there is not one treatment that is recommended exclusively or preferentially for COVID-19. While scientific and medical information, data, resources, and guidelines should always be used to make the best possible decision for each patient's treatment, the importance of each patient's specific clinical condition can never be understated.

Understanding that COVID-19 is a disease unlike anything the medical community has seen previously, treatment should be based on the most current medical and scientific information and data available. Due to the rapidly changing nature of COVID-19, information that osteopathic physicians use to guide the treatment of their patients may not always be of the same rigor generally expected of evidence-based medicine. However, POMA encourages osteopathic physicians seek and employ recommendations that have been most-appropriately determined.

Throughout the course of this pandemic, medicine and politics have intertwined because each affects the other, but neither is the master of the other. Elected officials like you, are charged with representing the people who elected them. You have an extremely difficult job during this pandemic and I know you are all doing your best to provide your constituents with information that will better their lives. As I shared previously, we are constantly learning about COVID-19 and are advancing our scientific knowledge daily towards better treatment and ultimately a vaccine. My advice for you as you talk with your constituents who have questions about treatment for COVID-19 is to encourage them to talk with their primary care physician.

To that end, the position of POMA is that osteopathic physicians should be the primary source of information for their patients and consider all aspects of a patient's condition and all appropriate medical and scientific information when treating patients with COVID-19.

Thank you for inviting POMA and myself to testify this morning and I will do my best to answer any questions you may have at this time.