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## Messaging in Response to Misrepresentation in the Media American Osteopathic Association

### The situation:

- When President Donald Trump reported his COVID-19 diagnosis and was subsequently hospitalized, White House Physician and Navy veteran Sean Conley, DO, provided the press with updates on the president's illness and treatment. The ensuing media spotlight on Dr. Conley resulted in unfortunate mischaracterizations of DOs that appeared, among other outlets, on CNN and MSNBC's Rachel Maddow Show.
- To set the record straight, the AOA launched an aggressive, comprehensive communications response aimed at correcting inaccuracies in the media and combatting the spread of misinformation on social media by challenging those who made false statements about the profession to #GetItRight.

### Specific examples of misrepresentation:

- Maddow questioned why President Trump's care is overseen by an "osteopath" rather than an infectious disease specialist or an internist. ([segment starts at 14:10](#))
- CNN pundit Gloria Borger implied that, as an "osteopath," Dr. Conley is not an "actual doctor."
- MSNBC host Andrea Mitchell interviewed former CIA director Leon Pannetta, who stated "while the President's doctor may be his doctor, he is an "osteopath" and not trained in internal medicine in the way others have been trained to deal with Covid-19." ([segment starts at 1:25](#))

### Sample language:

We may have less physicians, but we are not "less than"

- DOs are less common than MDs, but they are not less than. Doctors of osteopathic medicine are fully licensed physicians practicing in every specialty area.
- Osteopathic physicians hold high-ranking positions in our nation's top government, academic and medical institutions and are responsible for the health and well-being of millions, including our nation's astronauts and our commander-in-chief.

Many within the media have misrepresented the profession

- It is absurd that DO credentials are the focus of media scrutiny—and quite simply sloppy reporting. DOs are fully qualified physicians, end of story.
- If an MD is in the news, their credentials are not called into question.



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- Many of our physicians are fighting on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. They, and the rest of the profession, deserve better.
  - Our nation and world are grappling with an unprecedented public health crisis. Now, more than ever, we need trusted sources who understand health care and the providers who care for our nation. Media must be called out.
  - The AOA can help. Seek out a [source](#) from the AOA or an osteopathic physician in your [region](#) to ensure DOs are accurately represented and honored for their significant contributions.

#### Stats about the profession

- There are 151,000 osteopathic physicians and medical students in the U.S., making up approximately 11% of the physician population.
- The osteopathic profession has grown 63% in the past decade and nearly 300% in the last 30 years.
- Osteopathic medical students account for one in four medical students in the U.S.
- Nearly 7,000 new physicians graduated from osteopathic medical schools in 2019, bringing the total number of DOs: 121,006, the highest number in history.

#### DOs are in every specialty

- DOs are fully licensed DOs practicing in every specialty area, alongside their MD colleagues.
- DOs proudly serve as Pediatricians, OBGYNs, Anesthesiologists, Psychiatrists, Oncologists, Family Medicine Physicians, Emergency Medicine Physicians, Dermatologists, Plastic Surgeons, Ophthalmologists, Cardiothoracic Surgeons, and much, much more.

#### Training and credentials

- DOs, like their MD counterparts, complete four years of education at an accredited medical school.
- They train side-by-side with MDs in residency and fellowship programs for three to seven years, depending on specialty.
- As practicing physicians, they are held to the same standards by state licensing boards and are specialty board-certified.
- DOs have proudly served on the frontlines of medicine in the U.S. for the past 128 years.

#### Distinctiveness

- Osteopathic medicine is a distinct branch of medical practice in the United States. The osteopathic philosophy of medicine sees an interrelated unity in all systems of the body, with each working with the other to heal in times of illness.



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- DOs look beyond symptoms to understand how lifestyle and environmental factors impact wellbeing, and complete extensive postgraduate and clinical training before becoming fully licensed physicians.
  - Osteopathic medical students receive an additional 200 hours of instruction on osteopathic principles and practice, which includes empathetic, patient-centered care and osteopathic manipulative medicine, which leverages the body's ability to heal.
  - Doctors of osteopathic medicine use a unique whole-person approach to help prevent illness and injury.

#### Resources

- Osteopathic.org:
  - Status report: [AOA works to combat misinformation about osteopathic medicine in media](#)
  - Media Center: [Expert sources, news releases and FAQs](#)
  - FAQs: [What is Osteopathic Medicine](#)
- The DO: [Osteopathic medical profession fights back after CNN, MSNBC mischaracterize DOs](#)
- Doctors That DO: [Find Your DO search tool](#)
- Advocacy Alert: [Tweet to the Media: End the frequent misinformation about osteopathic medicine](#)