



January 11, 2021

Dear WPATH membership

To say the least, 2020 has seen its' share of challenges, disappointments, tragedy and heartbreak. Our fondest wishes go out to anyone adversely affected by the global pandemic. 2021 holds great promise! I seek to focus on the hope ahead while reviewing the positives of the past year, at least from my perspective. With that said, I am confident that this letter, like 2020, will be like no other.

WPATH has seen significant growth in its membership and programming over the past year, now with more than 2700 members and 49 countries represented. The WPATH Global Educational Initiative (GEI), responding to the need for virtual trainings amidst the uncertainty of COVID-19, introduced the inaugural Foundations and Advanced Course training programs. These initiatives were uniformly met by record numbers of attendees and from remarkable corners of the world. So too, the WPATH affiliated regional chapters of EPATH, USPATH, and the newly added AsiaPATH, continue to show individualized attention to the needs of their respective transgender and gender diverse populations. We also expect to see LACPATH (Latin America) emerge over the next year as a new WPATH affiliated regional chapter. Among my many personal goals for WPATH as an organization is to see the various PATHS parallel or at least complement one another while encouraging and fostering individual strategies that benefit their respective populations.

Acting as interim WPATH President while our current president, Dr. Walter Bouman, recovers from unexpected cardiac surgery in November, I expect to transcend the leadership gap as sensitively and competently as possible in his temporary absence, thanks to so many past and present Board members, and with the help of Veritas, our professional management company. In particular, I wish to congratulate Blaine Vella, in her new role as WPATH Executive Director. Among our many goals, we hope to add and include more individuals of diverse background to Veritas' management team going forward.

Globally, gender diverse and transgender persons continue to sustain high levels of discrimination and anti-trans violence, the US witnessing 37 deaths among our population, and more than 200 deaths worldwide, a disproportionate number affecting transgender women of color. As an organization, WPATH can, and must, own this violence until it can explain to the world through science and advocacy why gender diversity makes sense and why transgender

persons are worthy of love and broad acceptance. The release of SOC8 later this year should add to our collective message to the world.

Originally scheduled to be held in Hong Kong as an in-person event, our biannual 2020 WPATH Symposium was converted to a virtual symposium in November. Although many were disappointed to have missed an opportunity to participate in an American-style super spreader event, most agree that the transition to virtual was smooth, thanks to Veritas, our amazing presenters, volunteers and, of course, the broad list of attendees. What the virtual meeting did do was to open participation to corners of the earth not always reachable, showing us that our outreach must always be global. Some form of virtual participation is also likely in future conference formats for WPATH, USPATH, and GEI.

Significant strategic interests I see looking post-2020 forward include continuing to increase *membership*. Too many providers, and surgeons who treat trans populations are not involved in our organization and need to be---for their benefit and for their patients' benefit. So too, *quality standards* need to be higher, particularly in surgery. Dues and fees are what keep the organization afloat, but we must also make our financial ask commensurate with local economies and with respect to professional income differences. But please do note that dues, fees and charitable donations allow WPATH to spread our message and do the educational work that makes the world safer and more interesting. The Rose Fund was specifically created to increase charitable giving (see WPATH.org) Please! In addition, WPATH needs young persons in the organization, and we need more diversity in every aspect, from every corner of the earth. Greater *access to care* is possible only through providing more education, fighting attacks where necessary, and standing behind science and the needs of our clientele.

2021 is likely to be another year of change and tumult but, through science, through advocacy and determination, we will continue to make a difference in this incredible world. Stay safe, test negative, and find positives in the new year!

Please feel free to reach out to me individually, if you have concerns or achievable suggestions at marcibdoc@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Marci L . Bowers, MD