

Inaugural Address

S. John Swanson, MD

President (2021-2023), Delaware Academy of Medicine/Delaware Public Health Association

I am honored and humbled to be president of the Delaware Academy of Medicine / Delaware Public Health Association for the next two years, and extend my thanks to the board, membership, and staff, as well as the immediate past president, Omar A. Khan, MD, MHS.

Local readers of this publication may know me as the chief of the Kidney Transplant Program at ChristianaCare. Many colleagues and friends also know me as “Andrew’s dad.” Andrew is our 32-year-old son with severe autism who works in the pharmacy, in a job that uniquely fits the skills of a person with autism and not in a job fitted to a person with autism. His preparation for employment began 30 years ago in Maryland and continued until age 21 here in the Delaware school system as he prepared for adult life. Like many other adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD), beyond age 21 Andrew’s future is less certain. Many adults with IDD live with, and are supported by, obviously older parents. We remain Andy’s guardians and make important decisions on his behalf. A question my spouse and I ask everyday - What happens when we are gone? This is a question shared by so many others in Delaware, and beyond.

I hope we can all agree that the social determinants of health (such as satisfying employment, secure housing, personal safety, financial security, and a robust social life) make for a full and rich life. Add accessible and appropriate health care, and the picture is complete. As difficult as any of these issues are for us “normo-typical” people, they often seem insurmountable for the person with IDD and for their caregivers.

Influenced by my personal experience, and by the experiences of the hundreds of persons with IDD and their families that we have met in Andrew’s journey, I see a looming public health crisis. This has prompted me to propose a platform over the two years of my presidency to explore the public health issues of persons with IDD, and provide a venue for discussion, debate, and possibly, just possibly, some solutions to improve the lives of these wonderful people and their families. I ask you to join me. Thank you.

Dr. Swanson was the surgical director for the Kidney Transplant Program at ChristianaCare and Chief of Transplantation Surgery until his retirement in June 2021. He is a board-certified urologist who completed a residency in 1989 and kidney/pancreas fellowship training in 1991. From that time until his retirement in 2005, he had been the UNOS certified surgical director of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center Kidney/Pancreas Transplant Program. In 1994, he also became chief of the Organ Transplant Service, which he held until his retirement.

Copyright (c) 2021 Delaware Academy of Medicine / Delaware Public Health Association.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.