

OKLAHOMA

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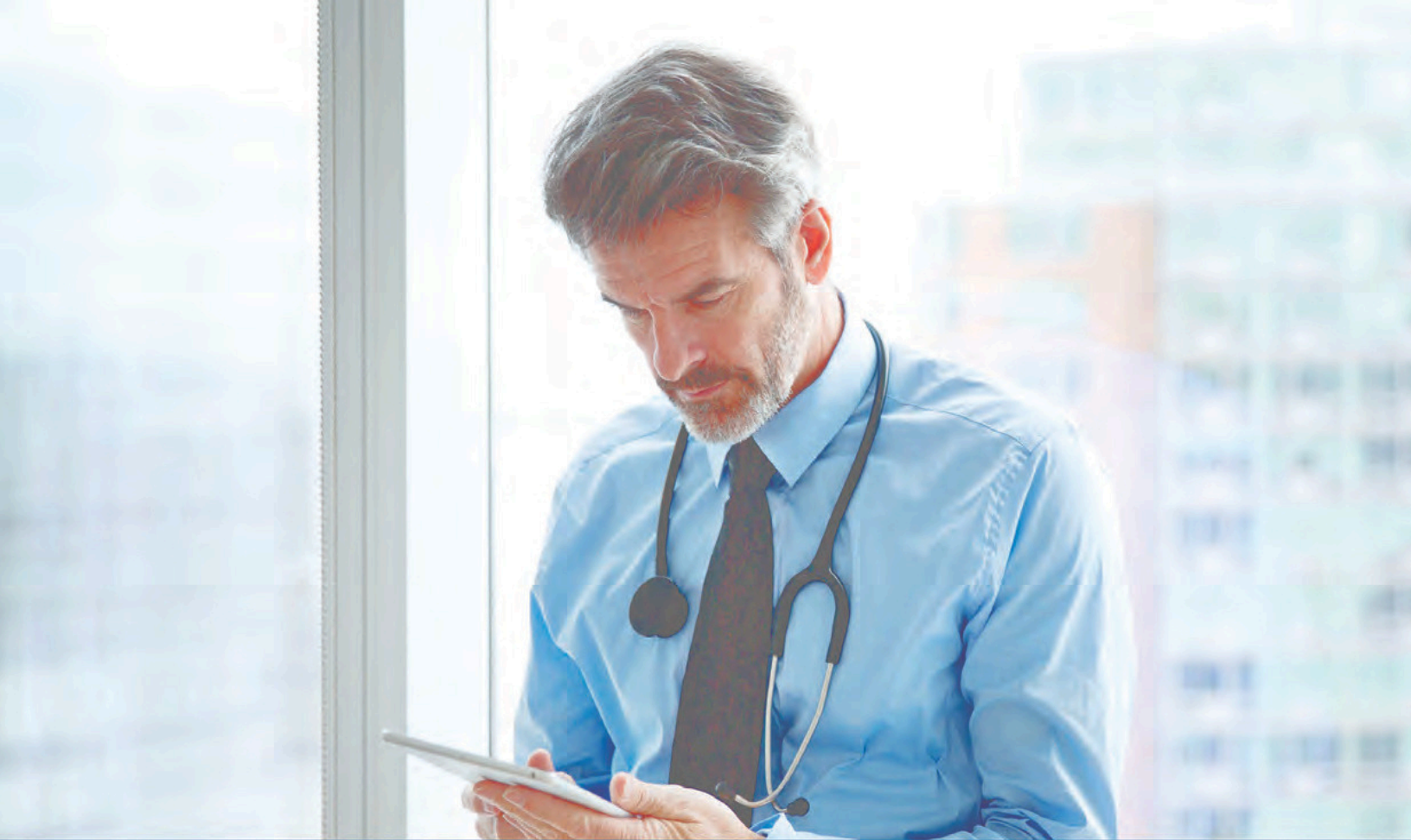
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SUMMER
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OKLAHOMA DO



5 **From the Director**

OOA CEO outlines priorities for protecting and strengthening osteopathic medicine in Oklahoma.



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Presidential Inaugural Address

Dr. Christopher Thurman begins his term as OOA President with his address to the membership. Read Dr. Thurman's vision for leading the OOA in the coming year.



8 **126th Annual Convention Recap & Honorees**

A look back at the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association's successful 126th Annual Convention "Back to The Basics" held April 30- May 1, 2026



OOA CEO outlines priorities for protecting and strengthening osteopathic medicine in Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA CITY — The chief executive officer of the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association says advocacy, unity and physician-led healthcare must remain central priorities for osteopathic physicians across the state.

In remarks prepared for members of the DO Journal, the CEO emphasized that the OOA exists solely to represent and protect doctors of osteopathic medicine in Oklahoma.

“If you are a DO in Oklahoma, this is your association,” he said. “Our mission is singular — to promote the health of all Oklahomans through education and advocacy for the osteopathic profession.”

Advocacy as a core responsibility

The CEO said advocacy is not optional in today’s healthcare environment. Legislative and regulatory decisions affecting licensure, reimbursement, scope of practice and managed care are accelerating in pace and complexity.

He reiterated the association’s longstanding position that physicians should oversee physicians in matters of licensure and regulation, particularly as discussions continue around board structure and composition.

“When policy is written without physician input, patient care is affected,” he said. “Strong advocacy begins with strong relationships.”

The OOA maintains regular contact with lawmakers, agency leaders and health officials at the state Capitol and beyond, he said, noting that sustained engagement builds credibility and access.



2026 PRESIDENTIAL INDUCTION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Christopher Thurman, D.O., Sworn in as President of the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association.

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Oklahoma Osteopathic Association officially welcomed Christopher Thurman, D.O. as its new president following his swearing-in ceremony on April 30, 2026. Dr. Thurman assumes leadership of the organization representing osteopathic physicians and medical students across Oklahoma. As president, he will help guide the association's efforts in advancing osteopathic medicine, supporting physicians, and advocating for quality patient care throughout the state.

“It is an honor to serve as president of the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association,” said Dr. Thurman. “I look forward to working alongside our physicians, students and healthcare partners to continue strengthening osteopathic medicine and improving healthcare access for Oklahomans.”

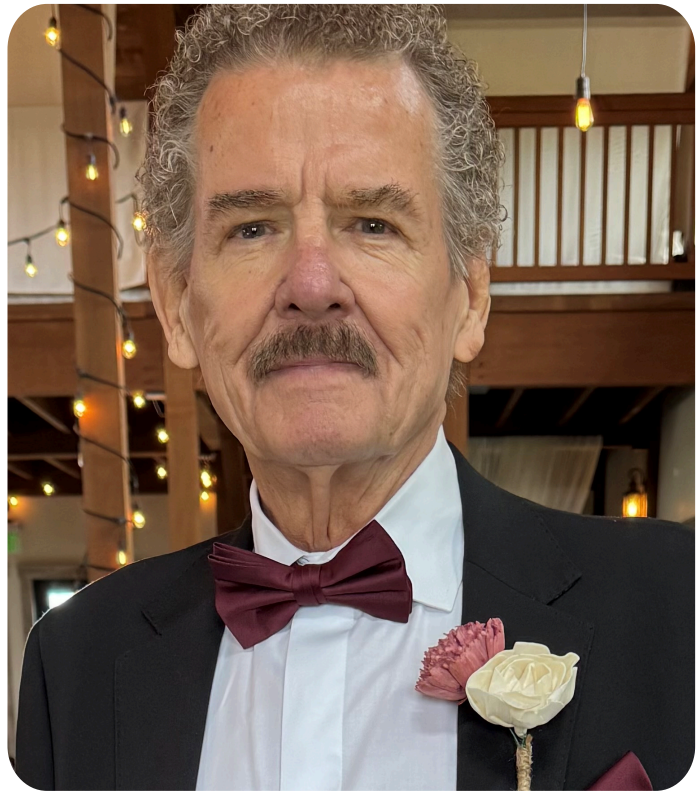
The OOA remains committed to promoting the osteopathic profession through advocacy, education and leadership development while supporting physicians dedicated to whole-person patient care. Dr. Thurman was sworn in during the association's annual convention and leadership transition held in Oklahoma City.

Doctor Of The Year

John Rice, D.O.

Dr. John Rice, D.O. has dedicated more than four decades to providing compassionate, comprehensive medical care to the Checotah community. A graduate of the University of Oklahoma (1972) and the A.T. Still University Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (1978), he completed his rotating internship in Traverse City, Michigan, before joining Parman & Payne Clinic in Checotah on July 1, 1979.

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Rice has served as an attending physician at Muskogee General Hospital, delivered babies for nearly a decade, and continues to serve on the courtesy staff at Saint Francis Hospital Muskogee. He became ACOFP certified in 1988 and has held numerous leadership positions, including multiple terms as President of the Eastern District of the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association and serving as President of the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association from 1998–1999.



Beyond medicine, Dr. Rice has been actively involved in emergency medical services, home health care, church leadership, civic organizations, and community service throughout eastern Oklahoma. Today, he continues to care for patients of all ages in Checotah four and a half days each week, exemplifying the dedication, personal touch, and continuity of care that define the osteopathic profession.

The Oklahoma Osteopathic Association is proud to recognize Dr. Rice as our Doctor of the Year. His unwavering commitment to his patients, his community, and the osteopathic profession has left a lasting impact on countless lives. We are thrilled to honor Dr. Rice with this well-deserved recognition and celebrate his extraordinary career of service, leadership, and excellence in osteopathic medicine.

Congratulations to **OUR 2026 LIFE MEMBERS**

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A LOOK BACK AT THE 126TH ANNUAL CONVENTION



A LOOK BACK AT THE 126TH ANNUAL CONVENTION





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OOA- PAC

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Dear OOA Member:

As Chairman of the OOA-PAC. I would like to thank each of you who have contributed to the OOA Political Action Committee (PAC) in the past.

The 2026 Oklahoma Legislative Session begins on the second Monday in February and ends on the last Friday in May. It is important that we, as a profession, continue to be active in the legislative process and in the election of officials who will be making decisions affecting the delivery of quality healthcare and your ability to practice as an osteopathic physician in the state of Oklahoma.

As a member of the Oklahoma Osteopathic Association, the OOA-PAC Committee would like to challenge each and every one of you to continue to show your support for Oklahoma's osteopathic community by supporting the OOA-PAC. Your contributions do make a difference! Your name and contributor designation will appear in the next OOA - PAC Roll Of Honor to be published in the OOA Journal. **CONTRIBUTE NOW! OUR GOAL THIS YEAR IS TO RAISE \$100,000!**

LeRoy Young, DO, FAOCOPM
Chairman, OOA-PAC

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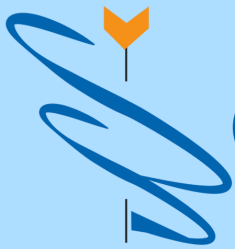
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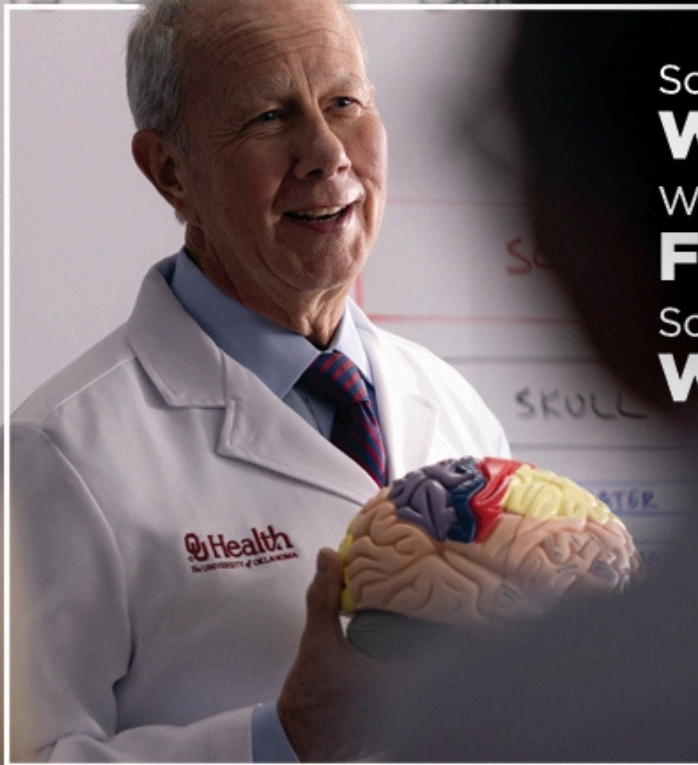
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PUBLICATIONS

Oklahoma D.O. Journal:

Electronic journal is distributed through the weekly OOA Newsletter to 6,000 physicians, residents and medical students and shared via the OOA's social media. Journals are also posted to the OOA's website.

Convention Program

Reach nearly 400 physicians with an ad in our annual convention program each inperson registrant receives on in their packet and it contains all of the vital information for the conference including the lecture schedule and social events. this program will be posted on the OOA website.

EXHIBITING

Winter CME:

This CME attracts around 300 physicians and other health care professionals who are interested in discovering how your products and services will advance and improve their work. Each exhibitor will have individual booths near the food and beverage area where guests congregate.

Annual Convention:

Held in April at the OKANA in Oklahoma City, this convention draws between 300-400 physicians across the United States both in-person and virtually. Choose from various booth options which will be set up in the dining and beverage area of the convention providing opportunities to connect with attendees. Convention includes four hours of exclusive, non-competing exhibit hours.

A Call To Action: Oklahoma's Osteopathic Physicians and the Evolving Substance Use Crisis

Layne Subera, DO, FACOFP, FAOAAM

Board Certified in Family Medicine, Addiction Medicine, and Pain Medicine

Owner, Skiatook Family Clinic | Medical Director, Center for Therapeutic Interventions, Tulsa, OK

Oklahoma stands at a critical juncture in the fight against substance use disorders. While recent CDC data show a welcome 41 percent decline in drug overdose deaths statewide between 2024 and 2025, a convergence of state budget turmoil and federal funding uncertainty threatens to erode the very infrastructure that made those gains possible. For osteopathic physicians—particularly those of us in primary care serving rural communities—the message is clear: we must be prepared to step into an expanding gap in care.

In 2025, the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS) disclosed a \$30 million budget shortfall, triggering the cancellation or reduction of more than 430 contract line items representing over \$40 million in services. Providers across the state face difficult decisions about whether to maintain or shut down service lines, and smaller organizations dependent on state funding may close entirely. Recovery housing beds, peer support programs, and rural recovery services are among the casualties. Meanwhile, at the federal level, SAMHSA—which has directed nearly \$750 million to Oklahoma over the past five years—faces proposed cuts approaching \$1 billion nationally, with Oklahoma potentially losing 39 percent of its federal behavioral health funding. The proposed consolidation of the mental health, substance use, and State Opioid Response block grants into a single reduced grant could compound these losses.

Adding further urgency, Oklahoma's landmark harm reduction law, SB 511, is set to expire in July 2026 after legislative efforts to extend it stalled. In just three years, harm reduction organizations operating under that law have reported over 1,000 overdose reversals and served nearly 9,000 clients. Its expiration would dismantle a proven lifeline.

These developments arrive against a backdrop of persistent need. In Tulsa County alone, an estimated 100,000 residents have a substance use disorder, yet roughly 77 percent of those needing treatment do not receive it. Methamphetamine remains involved in two of every three overdose deaths in Oklahoma, and fentanyl accounts for 86 percent of opioid-related fatalities. While the overall numbers are improving, the drugs on our streets remain extraordinarily lethal.

Osteopathic physicians are uniquely positioned to respond. Our training emphasizes treating the whole person—body, mind, and spirit—which is precisely the framework that patients with substance use disorders need. Since the elimination of the X-waiver requirement in January 2023, any practitioner with a standard DEA registration and Schedule III authority may prescribe buprenorphine for opioid use disorder—no special waiver, no patient cap. Yet nationally, while the number of buprenorphine prescribers has grown, the number of patients actually initiating treatment has increased only modestly. In rural Oklahoma, 56 percent of counties still lack a single buprenorphine prescriber. We have the legal authority; what we need now is the clinical will.

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As economic pressures mount and treatment infrastructure contracts, osteopathic physicians should anticipate an uptick in patients presenting with unaddressed substance use disorders. Be vigilant for the warning signs: unexplained weight loss, frequent emergency department visits, social withdrawal, financial instability, and requests for early refills of controlled substances. Screen routinely with validated tools such as the CAGE-AID or the single-question screen recommended by NIDA. Most importantly, approach these patients without stigma—they are our neighbors, and they deserve evidence-based care.

Oklahoma's osteopathic physicians have always risen to meet the needs of their communities. The current landscape demands that we do so again—by integrating substance use disorder treatment into our practices, advocating for sustained funding, and refusing to let hard-won progress slip away.

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Better health care for all Oklahomans is the primary purpose of the foundation.

Designated funds are used to support student scholarships annually to enrich the Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences College of Osteopathic Medicine, located in Tulsa, and the Cherokee Nation, and to maintain the Oklahoma Osteopathic Educational Center.

The Oklahoma Educational Foundation for Osteopathic Medicine was founded in 1967 with the mission of providing support to past, present, and future osteopathic physicians through scholarships and other financial aid. In 1985, the OEFOM Board of Trustees decided to build a safe haven for the osteopathic community located at 4848 N Lincoln Blvd, naming it the Oklahoma Osteopathic Educational Center. Forty years later, the mission and vision remain the pillars of the OEFOM.

I am writing to you today to ask for your consideration of a tax-deductible contribution of \$100, \$250, \$500, or \$1,000 or more to the general fund and/or the building maintenance fund. Your contribution, of any amount, to any of the following funds would be greatly appreciated.

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Thank you in advance for your continuing financial support that will allow the OEFOM to support osteopathic medical students and to maintain the headquarters for both OEFOM and the OOA.



The OEFOM was founded in 1967 and chartered by the State of Oklahoma as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit,

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Connect with us!

With everything vying for your attention, we know how hard it is to keep up with the latest osteopathic news. Follow these simple steps to make sure you don't miss a thing!

1

Like & follow the OOA on Facebook (Oklahoma Osteopathic Association- OOA) and Instagram (okosteo)

2

Sign up for OOA text alerts by texting 'OOA' to 405-544-4123. *We only send an occasional text so you won't be bombarded.*

3

Update your profile at www.okosteo.org so we have your most current contact information. *If you need assistance, call us at 405-528-4848.*

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Check your inbox Tuesday mornings for the latest edition of the OOA Newsletter.





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