

Match 2024- Dr. Margot Savoy

Why is family medicine more crucial now than ever to the health of our communities?

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I don't think there's ever been a time where we had more access to technology and medications and resources and things that we could use actually make people's lives better.

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And yet, as we get more and more of those things, what we're finding is that the gaps between the people who have and the people who don't, you just keep getting wider.

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And where family medicine becomes completely critical is being able to stand in those gaps and pull those two sides together.

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So understanding what your patients need, understanding what your community needs is what family physicians do best.

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And our ability to take in that technology, take in those new resources and then apply them to our communities to make sure they have access, to make sure they understand what new medicines are available to them, to make sure that they're getting the types of technology that they need, when they need it, if they need it, is something that we can do uniquely for the patients, the communities we care for.

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And that time is now when there's just has never been a time where we had so many opportunities and things available to us.

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And that makes us even more crucial for our patients and our communities.

How do you encourage medical students to consider family medicine?

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Oh, I love medical students. I just think, I remember being one. I know I look older, but it's not that long ago I remember being one. And I just remember being so overly excited and wanting to do all the things.

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And often when I tell medical students it's not that I want them to go into family medicine because I don't actually think that's a fair way to start.

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I start with asking them to explore what's exciting to them, what brings them joy, what makes them

happy, what part really sparks and ignites them and makes them think that this is where they want to be.

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What I find is that family medicine students, the ones who I know are going to ultimately become my colleagues in family medicine, are the students that can never really pick a thing because everything excites them.

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They're excited about some aspect of everything that they're doing on their rotations. They see the connection to the community.

They see that long term relationship with patients and how bad is really the joy and they find that family medicine is what's right for them.

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So it's less about trying to talk people into going into family medicine for me and more about having them go on a journey of discovery. And then they discover that the family physician was what they needed to be all along because it's who they were born to be.

2023 was record Match Day for Family medicine. What was your reaction to that, and what are your hopes for the future of family medicine?

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Match Day is so awesome. So my, my reaction to Match Day is always welcome because I'm so excited that you're going to be joining our family. And I'm so excited to have you as a family Doc and just, just excited to welcome you. So that's my first message.

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My second message is now turn around and look behind you and see who we need to be bringing along with us on this journey. So that now that you're one of us, it's part of your job to get to be part of this bigger family, this bigger network and making sure that we create opportunities for other people to learn about the great specialty of family medicine.

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My message is we should be super excited. We should be very welcoming of all of our new family physicians and then we should encourage them to tell us their stories so we can go on that journey with them, support them where they need us, but more importantly, just celebrate all the milestones with them along the way.

What are some ways the AAFP promotes family medicine to students and works to strengthen the pathway to family medicine?

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So one of my favorite parts of my job is that we get to spend so much time working on what we call pathway work. And for me, the pathway begins way before you're in medical school.

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The pathway begins all the way back in high school, thinking about your interest in love in science and

being a scientist, thinking about medicine as a potential career, and then grows and develops into becoming a medical student and ultimately choosing family medicine.

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And your pathway continues all the way through until you're actually an experienced clinician and you might be choosing and doing different things, too.

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What I absolutely love about the AAFP is that we are intentional about looking for ways to support you on every step of that journey.

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And so it isn't just that we have really great resources about how to match into family medicine and what to do when you first start your intern year to get good at the things you need to know clinically or to show up on your rotations and be smart.

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We don't just have resources about, say, career topics about picking a contract if you're in that third year residency.

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We also have content about supporting your clinical knowledge all the way through so you pass your boards also so you deliver the right care at the right time for your patients.

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We have content about everything you can imagine, switching careers, thinking about new things, all that's available on our website aafp.org.

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On top of that, we know that you need resources to help you do the best job you can. The places like familydoctor.org where we have information that you can use with your patients to help you communicate the messages that you want. All of those things go together.

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Now if you're a student, start with the student resources. We've got really cool things there that are just dedicated just for you that you'll find helpful from things in our app, from the journals, and from content like clinical education and resources.

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And of course, I would be remiss to not say something about National Conference, which is just the most amazing experience for students who are thinking about family medicine.

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Students who have already chosen family medicine and just want to spend some time with their family and residents, and faculty want to spend some time helping to feed that next generation. They can all find something great for them at National Conference.

Why is it so important to strengthen the family physician workforce right now to ensure a health future for communities nationwide?

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We do know that the family physician workforce is shrinking. So we have people retiring, which yay for them, right? They've had a whole career. We're really happy that they're able to go and retire.

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But we don't have as many people entering the specialty as we would need to match the number of people who are retiring out of the specialty.

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Now this is true across medicine broadly. So, there's just less doctors going into medicine. But I think this is something we could do different about.

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And often what I hear about are people concerned that, what if there's not a job for me? What if there's not a space for me? What if there's not a place for me? And what I suggest to people is that's just not the case.

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So medicine is an evolving space. I think that the skills and the talents you might need to be a really great physician in the future are going to look different than they did in the past. You're going to have to be more tech savvy.

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You're going to have to be more interested in spending time with people and getting to know them, individualizing care, thinking about things like genomics and generative artificial intelligence.

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Things that are just not even, you know, on the radar 50 years ago that are suddenly becoming tools that will be in your toolbox that you'll be using going forward.

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And so it may be that we're going to have a moment where people have to give some thought to whether or not medicine looks like the career that they want to have in the future.

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What's exciting for me and what keeps me going makes me think that for family medicine this isn't a problem, is that I can't think of a single specialty that is any more adaptive than family medicine.

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There are literally no places in the world that I can think of where you could drop a family physician and they couldn't MacGyver their way into figuring out how to get that community the best care they need because that's the way we're trained. It's actually what we're expected to do.

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And that, for me is the beautiful part, because it means that no matter what technology people come

up with, no matter what things we need to manage, no matter what diseases drop out of the sky like COVID, family physicians have the skill set, and they're trained to be adaptable and knowledgeable and figure out how to make that work.

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So there will always be a job for you as a family physician. There will always be a place for you in the hearts and the minds of your communities and the patients that you want to care for.

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There will be space for you, and you're going to get paid enough money to be able to take care of yourself and your family and do the work that you need to do.

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And so I just think that right now we're having a moment where people are starting to see the crunch. And I think it's happening, you know, in lots of different spaces, if we're being honest. But I really do think that there's a very bright future for family medicine.

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And I think the trick is in not getting discouraged, but instead looking for the opportunities where it means that the skills that you really love, the things that you do really well, suddenly become incredibly important, uniquely making you the person who deserves to have a career in family medicine and who your community deserves to have taking care of them in the future.