



GEORGIA OSTEOPATHIC
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
— 1902 —

GOMA News & Updates Volume 46, February 2024

GOMA Recommends the VOC for your CME Needs



THE VOC
CME FLEXIBILITY AT YOUR FINGERTIPS
• FEBRUARY 16-18 2024 •

**48 AOA
& AMA
CME
CREDITS**

LIVE OR ON-DEMAND!

REGISTER NOW!

When thinking about the Virtual Osteopathic Conference (VOC) 2024 and the fact that this is its fourth year (February 16 – 18), it makes sense that the origin of the VOC was the Covid-19 pandemic. And while we still are dealing with Covid-19, it is a less

virulent disease and vaccinations have helped greatly in reducing hospitalizations.

Doctors from around the country appreciate the high quality of the VOC agenda with experts from around the country. No travel is necessary for the VOC. If the times and dates don't work to watch the live program, one can watch the lectures on-demand until June 30.

It is anticipated that this will be a popular CME offering for doctors since 2024 is the last year of the three year AOA cycle for continuing education. Up to 48 hours of AOA Category 1-A and AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™, available for purchase in 8-credit increments should inspire many of doctors to review what subjects are to be presented.

We are going to profile some of the faculty of the VOC to illustrate the expertise of teaching this year.

Kelley Joy, DO will be speaking on “OMT Using your Head”. Dr. Joy is the Chair of the Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine & Associate Professor at the Joplin Campus of the Kansas City University College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Daniel Griffin, MD, PhD will make you question your diagnosis when he presents “It's Just a Virus”. Dr. Griffin is the Chief, Division of Infectious Disease - ProHEALTH, an OPTUM Company, Senior Fellow for Infectious Disease - UHG Research and Development, Clinical Instructor of Medicine - Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, Department of Medicine-Division of Infectious Diseases.

Katheryn Hudon, DO, FAAP, FACOP will edify by speaking on “Changing Healthspan: How to Harness New Guidelines to Manage the Pediatric Patient with Obesity”. Dr. Hudon is the Division Chief of Pediatrics at the Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences in Yakima, Washington.

Dr. Edward Barnes, MD, FACP is a physician who specializes in internal medicine. He is currently the Vice Dean of College Affairs, Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, and Chief of Division of Nephrology & Hypertension at Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, California. Dr. Barnes is also a Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine at the New York University School of Medicine and an Attending Physician at New York University Langone Medical Center. He will be speaking on “Glomerular Hyperfiltration & Proteinuria: Updates & Practical Clinical Approaches”.

Megan N. Wasson, DO, FACOG is an Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science in Minnesota. Her talk on “Chronic Pelvic Pain for the Primary Care Provider” is an important one.

The award for the most degrees goes to *James D. Hearn, JD, LL.M., MA, MAT., MPH, D. Bioethics, D.Min.*, Assistant Professor of Bioethics at Kansas City University. He will be speaking on “Ethics in Medicine: Navigating the Contemporary Landscape”. At the same time as that ethics lecture on a second track will be Amy Yang, MD, Assistant Professor of Molecular and Medical Genetics, School of Medicine of Oregon Health & Science University. She will be giving “Genetic & Pharmacogenomic Testing Update.”

“Facing the Extremes: Evaluation and Management of Heat and Cold Related Emergencies” is a good talk for the season by *Geoff Comp, DO, FAWM*. Dr. Comp is an Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at the University Of Arizona College Of Medicine Phoenix specializing in wilderness medicine.

Holly Villamagna, MD is an Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases, School of Medicine of Oregon Health & Science University in Portland. Dr. Villamagna will be giving an update on “Urinary Tract Infections” and will be available for your questions about this common problem.

Another update on a common problems will be “Gastroparesis: An Update for 2024” presented by *Matthew Bechtold, MD, AGAF, FACG, FASGE, FASPEN*. Dr. Bechtold is a Professor of Medicine, Director of Endoscopy, and Director of GI Ambulatory Services at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Claire Templin, DO, FACOOG is Division Chief of OBGYN-Assistant Professor at Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences. Dr. Templin will be speaking on “Beyond the Blues: Symptoms, Diagnosis and Treatment of Postpartum Depression and Anxiety”.

Allison Ferris, MD will prepare you for those weird labs with her talk on “Electrolyte Disorders for Primary Care”. Dr. Ferris is Assistant Dean of Faculty Development; Chair of the Medicine Department; Program Director of Internal Medicine Residency & Associate Professor of Medicine at Florida Atlantic University in West Palm Beach.

“Telehealth Best Practices: From Implementation to Encounter” seems like a good subject even if the pandemic is “over.” It will be presented by *Tania Elliott, MD, FAAAAI, FACAAI*, who is an expert in telemedicine and digital health, leveraging connected care technologies to bring care to patients, wherever they are. Passionate about the quadruple aim, she creates solutions to improve quality, efficiencies, access, and patient and care team experiences. She is currently Chief Medical Officer of Virtual Care at Ascension, advancing adoption of virtual visits and remote patient monitoring across the care continuum. Ascension is one of the largest healthcare systems in the country with 150,000 associates and 40,000 providers at 2600 sites, including 150 hospitals.

If you are impressed, please realize that the live program is just two weeks away (February 16 – 18). It’s time to register. If your schedule does not allow you to do it live, remember that the lectures are available on-demand until June 30.

[CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS AND TO REGISTER](#)

January 30 Was a Day of GOMA Advocacy at the Georgia Capital



GOMA with Rep. Shea Roberts



GOMA with Rep. Chas Cannon



Dr. Turner with Rep. Jesse Petrea



Dr. Shahid-Salles with legislators



Dr. Baron with Sen. Kim Jackson

The Patient-Centered Physicians Coalition of Georgia (PCPC) held its Day at the Capital on Tuesday, Jan. 30. GOMA is one of the five societies that comprise the coalition. GOMA has found that by combining forces with the American Academy of Pediatrics – Georgia Chapter, the American College of Physicians – Georgia Chapter, the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians and the Georgia Obstetrical and Gynecological Society, we have made an impact by improving healthcare for physicians and patients. After each group presented its 2024 legislative priorities, and then listened to the “ABC’s” of state capital logistics from keynote speakers Community Health Commissioner (Medicaid) Mr. Russel Carlson and Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities Commissioner Mr. Kevin Turner. The GOMA group slipped out to meet briefly with Governor Brian Kemp and his wife First Lady of Georgia Marty Kemp.



GOMA at the Governor's office



Dr. Turner addressing PCPC

Then, the representatives of GOMA met with Georgia House Representatives and Senators. GOMA was represented by (Left to Right): Brittany Woods, DO (hospitalist in Rome & Ex-Officio Advisor to the Board); Gregory Harris, DO (oncologist in Rome & President-Elect of GOMA); Sonbol Shahid-Salles, DO (ER doctor in Rome & President of GOMA); Michael Baron, DO (family physician in Stone Mountain & editor of GOMA newsletter); Bill Bostock, DO (family physician faculty at Northeast Georgia Medical Center FP residency & Chairman of the Georgia Composite Board of Medical Examiners); Karen Turner, DO (family physician in Savannah & GOMA District 4 Secretary/Treasurer & GOMA representative to PCPC); William Lagaly, DO (wound care specialist in Athens & Vice-President of GOMA) and not pictured but present was GOMA Executive Director Betsy Hilt.

Here are some of the subjects GOMA was trying to educate our elected officials about:

Tort Reform: Reforming Georgia's tort environment, including **supporting HB 470** Georgia CANDOR Act (Communication and Optimal Resolution) which will ensure a physician-friendly environment in Georgia that encourages physicians to pursue specialties of high need, such as obstetrics and gynecology.

Physician Workforce Sustainability: More support of osteopathic physician medical schools and residency training programs that will help attract and retain physicians to continue providing quality

patient care in the state of Georgia. This was done mostly by educating the legislators about osteopathic medicine and the training involved.

Health Insurance: Reducing administrative burdens on physicians and their staff by streamlining prior authorization. Ensuring the adequacy and transparency of health insurance networks. And improving patient access to medication by advancing pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) reform by **supporting HB 343** which would save patients money.

Medicaid: Continuing to ensure coverage of the uninsured, including **supporting HB 37** to mitigate the potential loss of Medicaid coverage caused by the discontinuation of the continuous enrollment condition of the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act by providing, continuing, and expanding services. Asa Hutchinson, former Governor of Arkansas recently gave an interview on a podcast, Politically Georgia, outlining the details of “The Arkansas model,” in which full Medicaid expansion (meaning coverage of patients up to 138% above the federal poverty level) was channeled into the private health insurance market. “It’s worked well in Arkansas. We fought hard for it, and it’s really helped us in terms of healthcare, but also controlling costs.” You will hear more about “The Arkansas model” this legislative session. Additionally **supporting (HB 916)** higher payments for Medicaid codes to mirror current Medicare rates more closely, which will ensure that physicians are able to participate in the program.

Public Health: Reduce smoking and improve funding for public health through an increase in Georgia’s tobacco tax to improve public health by **supporting HB 191**. Protecting the physician-patient relationship (see below). And keeping vaccine requirements for attending Georgia schools by **opposing HB 897**.

Scope of Practice: Addressing inappropriate scope expansion attempts by non-physician clinicians and ensuring proper oversight by physicians by **opposing HB 557** which allows non-physicians to prescribe opioids. Additionally, GOMA continues to work to protect

against title misappropriation by non-physician clinicians and ensuring proper oversight by physicians.

Composite Board budget: Dr. William Bostock's reports of the challenges that the Board only having a \$2 million budget despite bringing in over \$10 million. Due to tight financial constraints, the Board staff can't be expanded to meet the need nor can the highly qualified staff get fairly compensated. Dr. Bostock's passion on the subject was contagious and GOMA added the subject to our speaking points.

The afternoon session involved lunch and talks by House Health Appropriations Sub Committee Chair Rep. Darlene Taylor; Public Health Chair Rep. Sharon Cooper, RN; House Health and Human Services Chairman Rep. Lee Hawkins and House Special Health Committee Chair Rep. Butch Parrish.

The most applause of the afternoon was heard when the subject was gun safety. One of the pediatricians in attendance told the gathering about a non-partisan group of clinicians from across Georgia entitled Georgia Clinicians for Gun Safety in an effort to reduce gun violence. Public Health Committee Member Rep. Michelle Au, MD spoke about two bills **HB 161** which would require guns to be safely stored if minors are in a residence, and **HB 971 & HB 855** which would provide a tax credit for the purchase of gun storage containers. Dr. Au argued that HB161 which was introduced last year is not appropriate for the House Homeland Security committee, but rather should be moved to the Public Health committee (which all of the legislators that spoke were members of) in order to get a vote. She felt that by doctors contacting House Speaker Jon Burns that the Pediatric Health Safe Storage Act (HB 161) could be moved to the appropriate committee and get voted on.

The day was very productive despite some major distractions. U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock addressed the Georgia Senate that day imploring bipartisan cooperation in agreeing to accept \$1.2 billion in incentives to expand Medicaid for working class families (funds from the American Rescue Plan). The Georgia House was in shock due to

one of its influential members dying the prior day. Eulogies were said for Georgia Rep. Richard Smith, who led the powerful House Rules Committee that sets the agenda for votes in the state House, who died at age 78 after fighting the flu.

CORRECTIONS

If you have a question or a comment about articles or photos published in the GOMA Monthly Newsletter, email gomaosteo@outlook.com.

- The headline about Marla Golden, DO's new role at PCOM South Georgia published in January 2024 incorrectly stated that she was the President of the school. Dr. Golden is the new Dean of the Osteopathic Medicine program at PCOM South Georgia.

Paula Gregory, DO, Warns Family Physicians to Put On Their Oxygen Masks First



Paula Gregory, DO, MBA, CHCQM, FAIHQ, FACOFP is the editor of the journal *The Osteopathic Family Physician*. She currently lives in Maryland and is the Dean of the proposed Meritas School of Osteopathic Medicine in Hagerstown, MD. The OFP is the official peer-reviewed publication of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians.

Many will remember Dr. Gregory for her years working in Georgia and her first years of academic medicine at PCOM Georgia in Suwanee. She was President of GOMA in 2011.

In her December 2023 Editor's Message, she outlines the struggles of family practice, but warns, "We must care for ourselves, our colleagues, and our patients. If we feel the need to talk to someone, it's okay. As we work to improve and maintain health and wellness for our patients and staff, we must 'put our own oxygen mask on first' to do our best work. This will allow us to be the best physicians we can be for our patients, while maintaining our own mental health and well-being."

Members of the ACOFP can read her full editorial at:

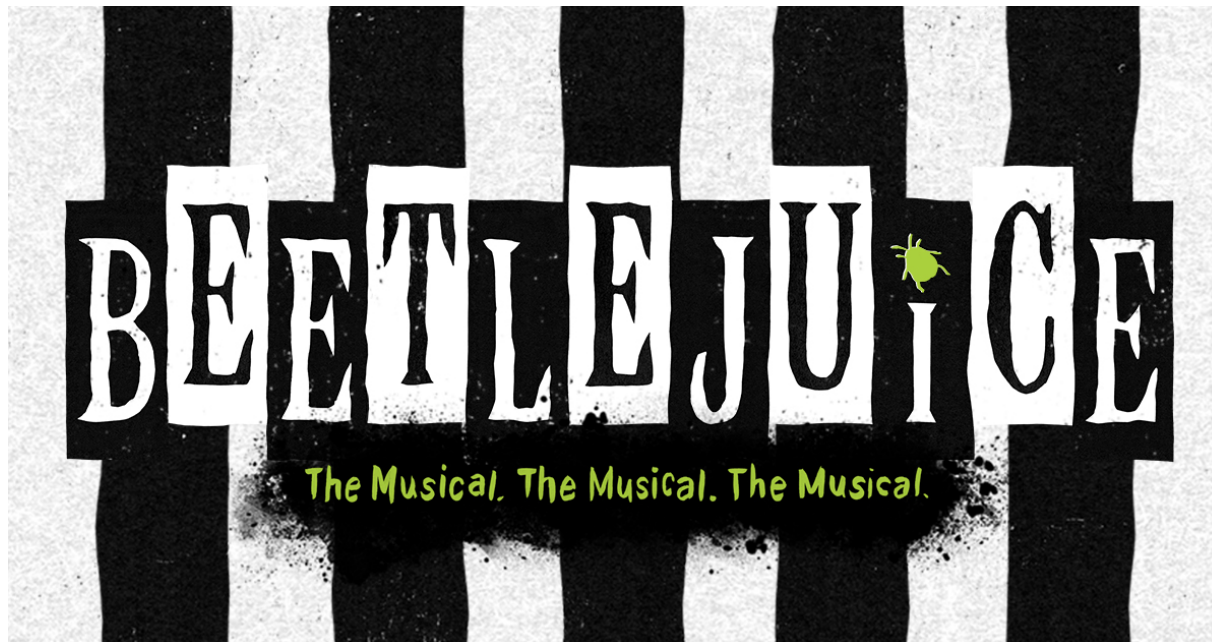
<https://ofpjournal.com/index.php/ofp/issue/view/111>

GOMA Now Has an Instagram Site



GOMA is hoping to reach more of Georgia's osteopathic physicians with its new Instagram site. The recent GOMA survey got a good response with half of the respondents not being members of GOMA. 43% of those surveyed felt that GOMA's current communication channels (newsletter, social media, and emails) were satisfactory, but 46% were neutral. Instagram is another way to reach all of the DOs in Georgia. [Give it a try...](#)

Join/Rejoin GOMA to Qualify for Drawing for 4 Tickets to Beetlejuice the Musical



Join/Rejoin Georgia Osteopathic Medical Association by March 1 and you will be entered into a drawing for 4 orchestra tickets to see Beetlejuice the Musical at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta on Saturday evening March 23 (though time can be changed to other days that week). Of course, [there are many reasons to join/rejoin GOMA and you will see them at this link.](#)

New Lifetime Members of GOMA

Two new Lifetime Members were announced at the Annual Meeting of GOMA on November 15, 2023.

Christian Geltz, DO is a retired OB/GYN who served the patients in the Decatur/Tucker/Stone Mountain region for decades. He helped educate many students and residents over the years. He has admirably served GOMA as a delegate to the American Osteopathic Association's House of Delegates. The Georgia caucus always looks forward to Dr. Geltz's choice of Chicago restaurants each summer.

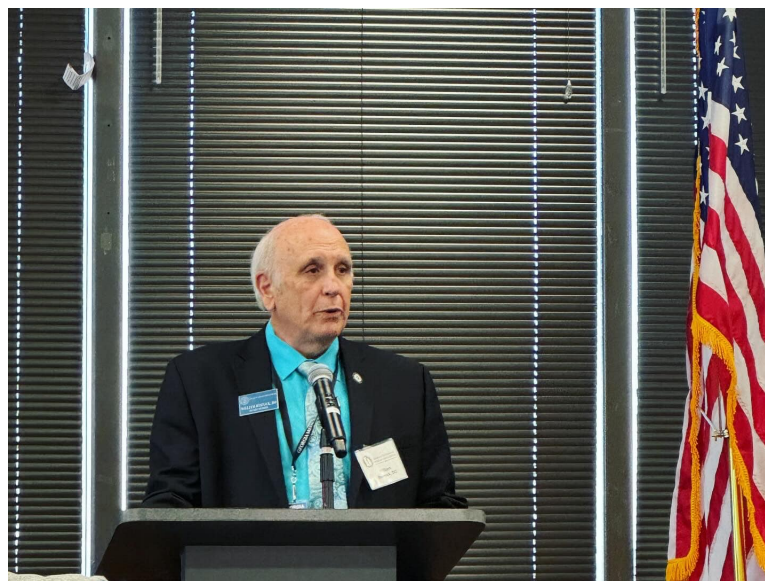
Neil Nickelson, DO is a retired pediatrician who served the patients of Lilburn for decades. He helped educate many students and

residents over the years. Dr. Nickelson was able to open the path for osteopathic pediatricians to be on the staff at Egleston and Scottish Rite Hospitals which had never accepted DOs on staff prior to his joining. Dr. Nickelson took a leadership role as the Chairman of the Board of the Georgia Osteopathic Institute (later to become the Osteopathic Institute of the South). Hundreds of osteopathic students were able to get third and fourth year rotations due to the Institute. PCOM located its first satellite campus in Suwanee thanks to Dr. Nickelson and the OIS because of introductions as well as a built-out clinical network prior to the first academic classes.

Congratulations Drs. Geltz and Nickelson!

Composite Medical Board to Limit Virtual Prescriptions

(content mostly from AJC article by Ariel Hart)



Starting May 1, the Georgia Composite Medical Board will reinstate a pre-pandemic ban on using only virtual patient visits to prescribe controlled drugs.

Dr. William Bostock, the board's chair, told an AJC reporter in early February that such rules are important "to protect the citizens of Georgia from dangerous medication which requires direct provider supervision to help prevent diversion (for illegal use) and unnecessary prescribing."

Dr. Bostock explained to the GOMA delegation on Legislative Day that the Georgia board has been wrangling in meetings with how to clarify the rules that resume May 1.

Until May 1, Georgia patients and doctors will continue to have the flexibility for virtual prescribing that they've had under the federal pandemic emergency declarations. On May 1, Georgia's longstanding rules restricting controlled substances will resume, with added statements from the board to clarify what they mean. Strict rules for prescribing controlled drugs such as Ritalin or Adderall are nothing new. Georgia has had such rules since 2014.

To start with, opioids like oxycodone will have different rules than other drugs like Ritalin, even though they're both controlled drugs. For all controlled substances, the doctor writing the prescription must start with an in-person visit with the patient, the board said in a written statement.

The doctor must be licensed in Georgia, but the visit can take place in or outside of the state, said Dr. Alexander Gross, chairman of the board's licensure committee. After that, it depends whether the drug is an opioid or not. Doctors prescribing opioids for pain will have to keep meeting the patient in person.

But if the drug is not an opioid, but rather something like Ritalin or Adderall to treat ADHD, after that first visit, virtual visits are fine, board members said. Instead, as the prescriber renews the prescription, he or she "must make diligent efforts to ensure" that patients are examined once a year in person, by a doctor, physician assistant or nurse practitioner who is licensed in Georgia, the board said in a statement.

The most recent state data showed more than half of Georgia's 159 counties — 90 — had no psychiatrist. But the rules are meant to protect the public from careless prescribing for profit. There's been a surge in drug addiction since the pandemic began. In addition, there has been a wave of private equity investment in virtual mental health practices, where good patient care might compete with investors' financial goals.

The Georgia Composite Medical Board licenses and disciplines physicians who work in the state. It can put a permanent mark on a medical license if it finds unprofessional conduct, or revoke the license altogether.

The federal government has its own restrictions on virtual prescribing, but those are still partly suspended under pandemic public health emergency powers. When the Biden administration was lifting its emergency declarations, it recognized the new popularity of virtual doctor visits, and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration left that flexibility in place. The federal restrictions will remain lifted until the end of 2024 in hopes Congress will update the law this year.

Bostock said in addition to the statements it has issued so far, the board intends to issue an FAQ on the subject before May 1.

District 2 Networking Event with 1 hour CME on Medical Ethics on Feb 25



GOMA has started back doing social events allowing osteopathic physicians and a guest to network with each other. The first one will be a District 2 (Fulton, DeKalb & Gwinnett counties) held on Sunday February 25 early evening celebrating National Tortilla Chips Day along with delicious Mexican food. It will be held in Dr. Michael

Baron's newly constructed home located in Tucker one mile outside of I-285 off of LaVista Road (center of the district). There will be a free 1 hour CME program on Medical Ethics by PCOM Georgia Associate Professor/Chair of Primary Care and GOMA Secretary/Treasurer L. Michael Waters, DO. Thanks to District 2 President Michael Mangonon, DO (hand surgeon) and District 2 Secretary/Treasurer Joseph Huang, DO (urgent care) for organizing this event. Please RSVP by February 20 by [emailing a note to Executive Director Ms. Betsy Hilt](#).

Albert L. Pick, DO, Died in Oklahoma at Age 99



Albert L. Pick, DO spent most of his retirement from his general surgery career in Georgia. He spent a lot of time on the tennis courts of Atlanta and then travelled to senior tournaments. Dr. Pick had moved to Georgia from Texas and was beating most of the tennis players in his age group. As a retired member of GOMA, he would join us at the GOMA continuing education programs. He was always happy to participate as well as strike up conversations with younger physicians explaining them the challenges of DOs decades earlier. Dr. Pick graduated from Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1967 after working as a petroleum engineer. He pursued his juris doctorate after becoming a general surgeon. As a World War II Naval officer and pilot, his graveside services were held at Mount Zion Cemetery in Ardmore Oklahoma on Friday, October 20, 2023 with a full military service. [See full obituary here](#).

Mourning the Death of Ms. Betty Brock



In early January, the leadership of GOMA mourned the death of Betty Brock on January 8 at the age of 65 years old. Ms. Brock was a staff member for Oak Ridge Association Management Company who worked closely with GOMA's Executive Director Betsy Hilt. In addition to other duties, Betty often did the layout of GOMA's monthly newsletter. [Her memorial can be found here.](#)

Survey & Strategic Planning

The recent survey of the entire osteopathic community of Georgia was a success. Half of the respondents were non-members of GOMA and 15% were medical students. This was the first step in a GOMA Strategic Plan to help guide the organization into the future. The Strategic Planning Committee is comprised of Drs. Sonbol Shahid-Salles, Gregory Harris, Bill Lagaly, L. Michael Waters, David Rearick and Michael Baron. The committee is meeting monthly and plans on producing a report to guide the GOMA Executive Board. They are meeting monthly with plans for a full day of in person discussions in the late springtime. The drawing for a participation prize was won by Emily Kiernan, DO, Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at Emory University. She will choose between a discount on the next GOMA conference or \$50 gift card to Starbucks to keep the ER at Emory Midtown fueled up.

Dr. Woitalla Helps UGA Students Stay Physically and Mentally Healthy



Finbar “Barry” Voitalla, DO graduated with his osteopathic medical degree from Nova Southeastern University in 2003. He went on to do his family practice residency at Eglin Air Force Base Medical Center, United States Air Force. He joined the University Health Center at University of Georgia in January 2018. He previously practiced as a primary care physician at Baumholder Army Garrison, Germany providing care for U.S. Army soldiers and their families from April 2015 – December 2017. Prior to that he worked at United Regional Physicians Group as a Sports Medicine/Non-operative orthopedics provider and as a primary care physician at Kell West Family Practice both in Wichita Falls, TX. Dr. Voitalla loves spending time with his wife, two young boys and German Shepherd. He also enjoys playing and listening to all kinds of music and taking in sporting events.

[See the interview of Dr. Voitalla by UGA staff and his advice on how students can better handle stress.](#)

In Other Words

“If you are in love – that’s a good thing – that’s about the best thing that can happen to anyone.

Don’t let anyone make it small or light to you.

The object of love is the best, and most beautiful.

Try to live up to it.

If you love someone – there is no possible harm in

*saying so – only you must remember that some
people are very shy and sometimes the saying
must take that shyness into consideration.
If it is right, it happens – The main thing is not to hurry.
Nothing good gets away.
Love, Father”*

**Letter from John Steinbeck, Pulitzer winning author, to
his son Thomas dated Nov 10, 1958**