Farewell
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In 2005, I submitted my first manuscript to JAAPA: “Nine key questions to address polypharmacy in the elderly.” I was published later that summer, and I still remember the excitement I felt when Tanya Gregory, PhD, the journal editor at that time, let me know my article had been accepted. With a smile expanding across my face, I raced down the office hallway to tell my colleagues. Much time has passed since that first manuscript submission, and much has transpired. Other manuscripts followed. I joined the JAAPA editorial board and eventually became the journal’s editor-in-chief. This year I enter my ninth year as editor-in-chief of JAAPA, and the time has come for me to open a door for the journal’s next editor.

From my office window, I can see the sun setting on the Potomac River and showering the horizon with a golden glow. Each issue of JAAPA published during my tenure sits prominently on my bookshelf. Flipping through the issues, from oldest to more recent, I am struck by how far we have come—as a journal, as a community of writers, and as a PA profession. Logos and mastheads have changed, but excellent clinical articles that exist to strengthen and inform PA practice are constant. The journal now boasts an ever-growing Impact Factor, signaling our work being read and adopted by others all over the world. Beautifully crafted essays embrace the medical humanities and reveal PAs as reflective, empathetic, and patient-centered providers. Editorials and commentaries predictably debate some of the same issues but also highlight new opportunities and challenges for PAs in the years to come. More than anything, these issues honor the thousands of authors, peer reviewers, and readers who have nourished and breathed life into the journal. Among them, many have become friends and trusted peers. This role as editor-in-chief has positively touched my life in countless ways, and I feel overwhelmed with humility, gratitude, and pride.

Let me report, however, that journal editing is not for the faint of heart. I think about the hard work, long hours, collaboration, and occasional conflict that has sustained JAAPA’s editorial independence. Maintaining this independence—essential if a peer-reviewed, indexed journal is to be credible and respected—is a perpetual challenge. I am grateful to the AAPA staff, the journal’s publishers, and the editorial board for their commitment to this shared goal. I look forward to being an ongoing resource to JAAPA, just as its prior editors have been to me over the years.

Last year, the editors of JAAPA and the Journal of Physician Assistant Education partnered to create “The PA Profession: 50 Years and Counting,” a digital collection of more than 200 pages of special anniversary content sharing who we are, where we have been, and what lies ahead. This experience connected me with numerous PA trailblazers and reminded me how important leadership succession is to future innovation for all causes and organizations, including this journal. Last December, I walked out of my office in Washington, D.C., and onto Pennsylvania Avenue to watch the funeral motorcade for former president George H.W. Bush. I thought about something his wife, Barbara, once said: “Believe in something larger than yourself … get involved in the big ideas of your time.” In reflection, this is what JAAPA has been for me—a living entity and a cause greater than me. I look forward with enthusiasm to the new directions, creative ideas, and innovations the next editor will bring to JAAPA’s pages.

Before my pen runs dry, let me offer some of what I have learned through my experience as editor-in-chief. First, we are all imperfect. When you make a mistake, even with the noblest of intentions, be quick to admit it and make things right, if possible. As a profession, PAs are stronger...
if we demonstrate humility. And, we can be humble and embrace the moral courage necessary to stand up for what is right and just.

Second, let each of us remember that as PAs, we are committed to improving health, continuously learning, and caring for patients, families, and communities with empathy, compassion, and evidence-based practice. PA leaders must subvert their own personal interests to the needs of these patients and families. As members of and stakeholders in local, regional, and national PA organizations, we must demand this commitment. I have found that PAs have an enormous capacity for altruism, collegiality, and innovation. Let us continue to pour these rich talents into our broken healthcare system to improve access, quality, safety, and health equity.

Third, celebrate and find joy in the success of others. Whether in your personal life or at work, let people know when they have done something worthwhile. Everyone benefits from encouragement and feeling valued, including your PA colleagues, trainees, collaborators from other healthcare professions, and even that coworker who usually just gets under your skin. There is no downside to a kind act.

Finally, stay curious and embrace lifelong learning. Scientific knowledge and the complexity of healthcare delivery are increasing at exponential rates. We are more likely to be successful in harnessing knowledge rather than mastering it, at this point. Embrace every opportunity to read, learn, practice, reflect, and be mentored.

For every PA who gives your best effort each day to improve the health and lives of your patients, their families, and your community, know that you are important and have been the single greatest source of inspiration to me throughout my work with JAAPA. Thank you to the writers, peer reviewers, editorial board members, publishing staff, the AAPA team, and readers who have made JAAPA a successful, award-winning, peer-reviewed publication specifically shaped for PAs. I appreciate you trusting me and affording me the great honor and privilege to serve as your editor-in-chief. The sun has now completely disappeared as I look out my window over the Potomac—a perfect time to say farewell. JAAPA