



Message from the President

# GLMA The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association

*GLMA's new president is Rob Garofalo, MD, MPH, a specialist in LGBT adolescent health at Howard Brown and a faculty member at Children's Memorial in Chicago. You can reach Rob at [rgarofalo@childrensmemorial.org](mailto:rgarofalo@childrensmemorial.org).*

## *Dear Friends:*

At the GLMA annual conference which concluded in Montreal in September, I was amazed to see just how far our GLMA community has come.

A few years ago we only dreamed of having the access and clout to achieve our mission at the highest levels of the medical establishments in the United States and Canada.

Now we actually have it.

Everyone I talked to was filled with pride to see, feel, and experience from both speakers and conference attendees just how important our recent public policy, education, research and advocacy work has been in promoting equality in health care for the LGBT community.

Conference highlights included:

- The warm welcome of the Honourable George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care of Ontario and Canada's first openly gay Minister of Health.
- The historic presence of American Medical Association President Edward Hill, who delivered an inspiring talk on equality in health care and outlined a commitment to work with GLMA on addressing the unique health concerns of LGBT persons.

- The graceful, heartfelt words of former Attorney General Janet Reno, advocating for equity in health care and universal health coverage.
- GLMA's first annual Lesbian Health and Transgender Health Pre-Conference Institutes.
- The most diverse group of interdisciplinary speakers in GLMA history -- ranging from physicians to psychologists, nurses, physician assistants, students, researchers, social workers, public health advocates, sociologists, therapists and lawyers.

As always, our conference also gave LGBT health care providers the opportunity to meet other community members from around the country and the globe.

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However, the conference is but one weekend each year. This past year GLMA has had many successes in changing systems that have long denied LGBT equality in health care.

A few months ago, advocacy by GLMA and our partner organizations (especially Lambda Legal) convinced the California Medical Association (CMA) to withdraw its support of doctors who refused on religious grounds to artificially inseminate a San Diego County lesbian. Furthermore, not only did CMA withdraw its support in the state court case, but in a complete reversal it now argues a position entirely in our favor.

Take a look at CMA's new position:

"CMA does not condone invidious discrimination by physicians, including discrimination of patients based upon sexual orientation. Further, CMA does not support a religious exemption to statutes prohibiting invidious discrimination." Policy successes don't get much clearer than that!

We've had similar stunning victories in New York, where New York Medical College outlawed an LGBT student group, but then due in large part to pressure brought by GLMA, NYMC was later forced to back down and reinstate the club. This advocacy effort brought about the historic working relationship between GLMA and the AMA, and the AMA House of

Delegates passed a resolution forbidding such discrimination in the future.

Yet despite our successes, a great deal of work still needs to be done. There are still too many day-to-day fights that need our perseverance and expertise as GLMA members to effectively fight and win. For as long as there are gay or bisexual men being infected with HIV; as long as there are lesbians who take up smoking; as long as there are transgender individuals who struggle for access to health care; and as long as there are LGBT youth who even contemplate suicide as a result of their sexual identity, our work remains incomplete.

A recent Time Magazine cover story, "The Battle Over Gay Youth," is a startling reminder of just how much work remains to be done.

As many of you know, I've had the privilege to spend my career working with LGBT youth and HIV-affected youth. Many of them have been outcasts. That's certainly no surprise; any of us can think back to our adolescence and recall what it was like to grow up different and isolated. In this cover story, they try very hard to portray the lives of LGBT youth, which admittedly are very different - for better or worse - than the generations before them.

But in many ways, they just don't get it. They go on to describe the experiences of LGBT youth as increasingly "ordinary" in today's society. Even under the best of circumstances and with the best available peer and family support - there is still nothing "ordinary" about growing up LGB or T in today's world. The vast majority of LGBT youth that I've encountered are quite "extraordinary" - not just with regard to risk, but with regard to the strength, perseverance and resilience they demonstrate in being more open about their lives and experiences.

In addition, the article reports much on "new" Christian approaches to homosexuality, which by-and-large are simply a crafty repackaging of reparative or conversion therapy. It is not particularly "balanced" or "fair" to give national exposure to people who have no scientific basis for what they espouse. An article about race or gender would never give "equal time" to people who espouse racism or sexism.

When I see an organization like Time Magazine with its vast resources - and, yes even good intentions - clearly miss the point about such a fundamental issue, I realize once again why GLMA still has so much work to do.

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So, what are GLMA's priorities for the upcoming year?

- Growing our LGBT Medical Experts Panel
- Preparing for our Silver Anniversary Conference and Celebration to be held in San Francisco on October 11-14, 2006
- Working on a new initiative to disseminate and promote LGBT cultural competency materials to students, residents/fellows, and practicing professionals across North America.

Therefore, while continuing our advocacy and educational work, we are planning a specific program to convince tens of thousands of health care professionals that they need to increase their ability to provide appropriate care to patients they might not even realize are LGBT.

But, we need your help.

Get involved with GLMA if you support the kind of major change that follows greater cultural competence throughout the health care system. Please consider increasing your financial support of GLMA to make it all possible.



**Click on the [Donate Now!](#) button to add to your much-appreciated continuing support.**

Before closing, and on a more personal note, it is with great appreciation to outgoing president Tri Do and all the others who have worked so hard for our cause that I am eager to begin my year of service as GLMA's new president. I hope that my work with LGBT adolescents and adolescents with HIV will add an additional layer of awareness to GLMA and its mission as it relates to the youth in our community. This is a time of enormous

opportunity as we are closing in on our goal of becoming a major international leader in LGBT health.

We hope you will continue your support and membership. Send suggestions, help out on GLMA committees, plan on attending next year's annual conference, and tell your LGBT colleagues and friends about the work GLMA is doing for equality and competence in LGBT health care. It is our membership that gives us our strength.

We are going to have one heck of a year.

With thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Garofalo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Robert Garofalo MD, MPH**  
President, GLMA

Learn more at [www.glma.org](http://www.glma.org)