

## ACPM Member Spotlight—Jacob Adams, MD, MPH, FACPM

Donna Grande, MGA, Chief Executive Officer, The American College of Preventive Medicine

Every now and then you meet a preventive medicine physician who truly stands out from other physicians — someone who leads with his heart and exudes passion for the profession like no other. Dr. Jacob Adams truly emulates such a passion for prevention and a deep love for the field of preventive medicine.

Dr. Adams has dedicated his professional career to training and building the next generation of preventive medicine physicians through his work leading the residency program at the University of Rochester and creating an endowment to ensure residents are able to travel and attend annual conferences hosted by the American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM).

Dr. Adams attended the 2023 annual conference in New Orleans and was able to personally honor the recipient of his 2023 Scholarship Award, Dr. Sylvia Caswell. It was an incredible moment to see the joy on the face of the recipient and for her to personally thank Dr. Adams for his generosity. I had a chance to capture some insights from Dr. Adams that I share below.

### Why did you choose Preventive Medicine as your specialty?

First and foremost, I was attracted to the specialty due to my love of epidemiology which I developed in medical school. I was blessed to learn from Leon Gordis who led the Introduction to Epidemiology course. Second, I have been interested in advocacy and public health since Junior High School and the field offers numerous opportunities to use your voice for change. Third, before starting my residency, I was fortunate enough to complete a Preventive Cardiology Research fellowship under Dr. Thomas Pearson, a fellow of the American College of Preventive Medicine, American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology, among other organizations. His stories of his residency experience piqued my curiosity in completing a residency and his work as department chair to create a residency program made this choice rather easy. The individual he chose to direct the program, Dr. James Tacci, had



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many talents and experiences that I did not have and those would help me advance my career. Finally, my interest in tertiary prevention as well as primary prevention fit naturally within the General Preventive Medicine residency.

### How did your training in preventive medicine prepare you for embarking on your career?

Like many in preventive medicine, I did not have a linear career path. I began and completed the preventive medicine residency after having started a cancer-survivorship and cardiovascular epidemiology research career. However, completing residency and becoming board certified in general preventive

0749-3797/\$36.00

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2023.09.017>

medicine opened more career possibilities, including practicing direct patient care. It also broadened my interests and expertise, particularly in public health and quality improvement. The residency provided me with the experience and certification to become my residency's program director and teach quality improvement to other specialty trainees and public health graduate students. Finally, thanks to the efforts of ACPM's current president, Dr. Mirza Rahman, I became quite interested in pursuing a career in pharmaceutical surveillance, although personal circumstances prevented me from continuing along that pathway.

**You established a very generous endowment for the College to offer scholarships for residents interested in attending the ACPM Annual Conference. What inspired you to make this contribution and to leave this legacy?**

As implied in my response to the previous question, personal circumstances caused me to retire prematurely. The circumstances forced me to focus on what I valued most and what I hoped my legacy would be. I recognized that helping others, particularly training the next generation of public health and health practitioners, particularly general preventive medicine physicians, and childhood cancer advocacy were my top priorities. Having been blessed with some wealth, and now being limited in my ability to directly contribute to the training of preventive medicine residents and recognizing the opportunities that attending the annual Preventive Medicine conference provides as well as its expense, I felt that one of the biggest contributions I could provide to our specialty was setting up this scholarship to advance the careers of promising yet under-resourced trainees. I could not be more pleased with the accomplishments of the first two awardees and what they portend for their future impact on the health of our nation's population.

**What advice would you offer young physicians who are beginning their journey in medicine?**

First, explore experiences you have not tried and areas you are not strong in, as well as known areas of interest and expertise. Second, develop at least three SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound) personal learning goals for each of your rotations and courses. This will make you more enthusiastic about each learning opportunity, and give you experience in a basic skill that is also essential for program quality improvement. Third, develop multiple skills and always have a potential plan B in mind.

**What is the best advice you received that made a difference in your career decisions?**

Gain experience in potential career activities you are interested in before you commit to formal pursuits. While I did not hear this until recently, "as long as you are pursuing experiences that help you determine professional activities that you like and those that you do not like or do not fit your strengths, you are on the right path."

**From your point of view, what is the key benefit that a professional association such as ACPM can offer an individual?**

ACPM provides professional connections that will open doors for you, provide mentors, lifelong friendships and help keep you enthusiastic about your career. Many of my best professional friends are those I met at annual ACPM conferences. Working on the Policy Committee, Health Systems Transformation Committee and Science and Translation Committee helps me have a wider impact on the health of our nation. My activities with ACPM also help me feel vibrant and relevant by giving me the opportunity to meet young physicians and physicians in training pursuing our specialty and sharing my knowledge and experience with them.