

Congratulations, we actually made it to 2021. 2020 was a demanding year for all of us. It certainly felt good to see the calendar change. Last year we faced challenges that few could have imagined. In the blink of an eye all of our familiar routines were disrupted, and our practices transformed. Hundreds of thousands of our friends, colleagues, and family members succumbed to the virus. Those of us that endure will not soon forget the tragedy and trials of 2020. We are changed forever. As I write this letter, however, there is **HOPE**. Safe and effective vaccines have been developed and are being administered with unthinkable speed. Depending upon your state, orthodontists and our teams have been some of the first to become eligible for vaccination. In fact, I received my second injection just last week. Although the vaccine can have some minor side effects, for your personal safety and that of your family, friends, team members, and patients, I encourage you all to do the same. Furthermore, as respected members in your communities your voices can carry extra weight. I encourage you to use your positions as trusted healthcare providers to promote vaccine acceptance among your circles of influence. I recently saw the results from a [government survey](#) which indicated, "Around half (51%) of the approximately 226 million adults yet to receive a vaccination said they "definitely" plan to receive it when available." Given all that we have been through and all of those that we have lost, that number seems low to me. I would hope that we as a profession could set a positive vaccination example for those around us and encourage all to strongly consider it.

Meanwhile as we all wait and pray for the vaccines to bring an end to this pandemic, the COVID-19 disruption continues. Many of you have no doubt have seen that the AAO's Annual Session, which was a virtual gathering in 2020, has again been impacted by the virus. The good news is that the AAO still plans to offer us all an in-person opportunity to get back together again. The meeting, as originally planned, will still be held in Boston. However, the length of the meeting has been condensed to be held over a long weekend and moved to a little later in the year (June 25-27<sup>th</sup>). [Registration for this AAO meeting](#) opens on February 16<sup>th</sup> and it is bound to be a unique experience. I do not think it will be one you will want to miss. I hope to see many of you there.

Speaking of a return to in-person meetings, please do not forget to **Save the Date for our GLAO Annual Session October 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> in Indianapolis**. We have planned an excellent program in a conveniently accessible location for both you and your staff. I look forward to welcoming you to my home state for cutting-edge discussions and some Hoosier hospitality. Let's plan to get "Back on Track Together". Please watch your inbox or check out our [webpage](#) for registration details.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that it is my honor and privilege this year to serve and represent you, the orthodontists in the Great Lakes region. Whatever professional challenges you may be facing, please know, the GLAO leadership team is here as an important resource to assist you. Do not hesitate to contact me. I wish you and your families continued safety and good health.

Respectfully,

Anthony Puntillo (dr.p@pandcsmiles.com)  
GLAO President