ORANGE COUNTY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

The OCMA Physician of the Year Award is presented annually to a physician who has demonstrated outstanding leadership skills and extraordinary professional competence in the eyes of their peers, is a proven educator, teacher, motivator and compassionate clinician who has made a difference in the delivery of health care and in the lives of Orange County residents.

Taking Charge of the County's Response

Since 1983, OCMA has had the honor to recognize such outstanding physicians and community leaders with this prestigious award. This year's recipient exemplifies those qualities as outlined above and evidenced below. Therefore, the OCMA Board of Directors and the OCMA Physician Recognition Committee are pleased to announce that the ***2021 Physician of the Year is awarded to Clayton Chau, M.D., Ph.D.***

Dr. Chau serves as both director and the public health officer for the Orange County Health Care Agency. Dr. Chau assumed his role during the most difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic in Orange County. Not only did he take charge of the county's response in the early and confusing days of the pandemic, but he assumed the position upon the sudden resignation of Dr. Nichole Quick due to personal threats to her and her family caused by the political polarization within the community and with elected officials. Those were very difficult days within public health throughout the nation.



Dr. Chau quickly proved that he could navigate the politics and formed a county-wide task force of community leaders to confront the issue. Jason Cord, M.D., president of OCMA, stated "I had the honor to serve on the task force and witness firsthand the evolution of the response in Orange County from total confusion and uncertainty to a well-organized vaccination program that has inoculated thousands of Orange County residents. That success continues today. Further as a figurehead for the COVID pandemic he represents the actions of many of our selfless providers who have, through him, worked together to fight this pandemic and seek resolution."

Dr. Chau previously served at the HCA, having been a member of the Behavioral Health Services team from 1999 - 2012 and most recently, Chief Clinical and Strategy Officer for Mind OC, the not-for-profit created to support the advancement of Be Well OC. He is a celebrated member of our community who was honored by the Orange County Board of Supervisors with a Community Services Recognition Award in 2018 for his innovative work as a thought leader and consensus builder in the creation of this initiative, which is the first-of-its-kind in the state to leverage the best-in-class capabilities of public, private, academic, and faith-based entities to create a coordinated system of care. Dr. Chau has brought the wealth of experience he has gained in the behavioral health system to the Health Care Agency.

He was previous employed by Providence Health System, the third largest health system in the country, as the Regional Executive Medical Director of the Institute of Mental Health and Wellness Southern California Region. Appointed by the 23rd U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, he is a member of the Interdepartmental Serious Mental Illness Coordinating Committee. His past positions include Senior Medical Director for Health Services at L.A. Care Health Plan, the largest nonprofit health plan in the nation, responsible for behavioral health, care management, utilization management, and disease management. In that capacity, Dr. Chau was actively involved in the development of the Los Angeles County Whole Person Care Program. He was also the Co-Principal Investigator for a multi-year Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Innovation grant in Transforming Clinical Practice.

Started at a young age as a community outreach volunteer, Dr. Chau has been devoted to a lifetime of continuous learning to better serve the community. Rooted in public health principles, he focuses his efforts in partnering across multiple sectors and leveraging data and resources to address social, environmental, and economic conditions that affect health and health equity. Core to his heart is the issue around vulnerable communities and the human and health inequity during and post COVID-19 pandemic. In his spare time, which has been minimal to none during the pandemic, Dr. Chau enjoys cooking (his method of meditation), movies, hanging out and traveling with friends and family.

Physician of the Year is chosen for one's contribution and impact during a specific time period. Fully acknowledging the outstanding efforts of thousands of physicians in Orange County who saved lives and risk their own safety in treating COVID patients, Dr. Chau's leadership in guiding the effort visibly stands out as an unselfish and vital contribution worthy of Physician of the Year.