



Fighting blood clots  
through education

# THE Beat

April 2023

**Special Edition**

A publication of  
the North American  
Thrombosis Forum



## The Next Generation of NATF Leaders

After nearly two decades of leadership and service to NATF, Dr. Samuel Goldhaber, our beloved Founder and President, and Dr. Gregory Piazza, our Chair of Healthcare Provider Engagement & Education, will be stepping down from their positions on the Board of Directors. NATF would not exist without their vision, guidance, loyalty, and dedication over the last 15+ years. While their departures are bittersweet, Drs. Goldhaber and Piazza have ensured that NATF is well positioned for the next decade and beyond.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Medical Advisory Board, we're pleased to announce that **Dr. Christian Ruff** has graciously accepted the Board's nomination for NATF President.

**Dr. Nathan Connell** will be joining the Board as our Chair of Healthcare Provider Engagement & Education, and **Tara Lech, PharmD** will become the Co-Chair of our Medical Advisory Board after Dr. Ruff transitions to the role of NATF President. We are thrilled to continue working with these talented and dedicated individuals and strengthening NATF's legacy.



## A Message from Dr. Samuel Goldhaber Outgoing NATF President

### To my NATF Family:

Let's travel back to the year 2000. Most people had never heard

of *pulmonary embolism* (PE) or *deep vein thrombosis* (DVT), and medical professionals were rarely up to speed on these conditions. Major cardiology and pulmonary meetings devoted very little time to supporting research, education, and clinical trials to prevent, diagnose, and treat these illnesses. There was a large educational gap to fill, which beckoned a small but mighty group of researchers to chart a new course. Drs. Arthur Sasahara and Jawed Fareed were our senior statesmen. John

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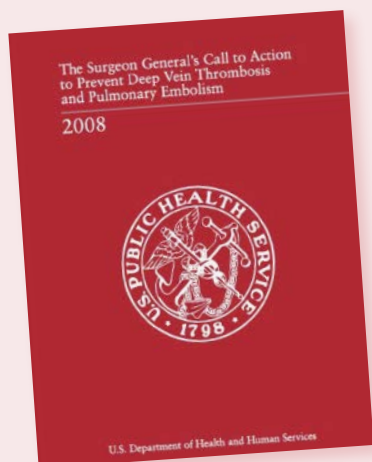


The NATF Board of Directors in 2014. From left to right: Dr. Gregory Piazza, John Fanikos, Dr. Arthur Sasahara, Dr. Jawed Fareed, Dr. Christian Ruff, Kathryn Mikkelsen, Dr. Samuel Goldhaber, and Dr. Jeanine Walenga.

Fanikos, RPh, MBA and I were the junior renegades. We dreamed about establishing a new nonprofit organization that would champion education about thrombotic illnesses for both the public and for medical practitioners. The movement would be international in scope but would build educational bridges with local communities. We aspired to set the stage for clinicians, patients, researchers, government officials, and industry members to come together and engage in brainstorming, discussion, and tangible progress.

For the next five years or so, we outlined and revised our strategy and continuously tweaked our game plan. In 2006, I went to a top Boston law firm to incorporate the North American Thrombosis Forum (NATF) as an official nonprofit organization. Two lawyers working for the firm sat me down, looked me in the eye, and said: "You have to understand that in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 95% of new nonprofits vanish within five years. They go bankrupt and disappear."

That cautionary note spurred us into action. We worked with the Surgeon General to help edit and publish the [2008 Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent PE and DVT](#). We created a national network of faculty and educational programs on thrombosis. We added atrial fibrillation to our portfolio of thrombotic diseases that would benefit from our skill set. We elected Dr. Gregory Piazza to the Board of Directors to create and oversee our education programs and Dr. Christian Ruff to run a multitude of projects. Dr. Ruff's first major endeavor was to edit a multiauthor supplement—an *NATF Action Initiative*—on all aspects of atrial fibrillation for the [American Journal of Medicine](#).



***"The best estimates indicate that 350,000 to 600,000 Americans each year suffer from DVT and PE, and that at least 100,000 deaths may be directly or indirectly related to these diseases. This is far too many, since many of these deaths can be avoided. Because the disease disproportionately affects older Americans, we can expect more suffering and more deaths in the future as our population ages — unless we do something about it."***

For administrative assistance, we evolved from having no staff support to hiring someone to work part-time – and then about a decade ago, Kathryn Mikkelsen, MBA became NATF's Executive Director. She hired three additional staff members over the ensuing years: Courtney Anderson, Aviva Schwartz, MA,

and Maggie Newberg. NATF has since developed a new website with a new domain name ([www.thrombosis.org](http://www.thrombosis.org)), a bimonthly publication, [The Beat](#), additional Action Initiatives on [anticoagulation](#), [cancer-associated blood clots](#), and [blood clot risk in transgender patients](#), a thriving [Medical Advisory Board](#), and a 3-year business plan, for which Kathryn was the chief architect. NATF provides administrative support for the [Blood Clot Support Group](#) that Ruth Morrison, RN, BSN, CVN and I started more than three decades ago. NATF has also established a [support group specifically for patients who have been diagnosed with a blood clot within the last 12 months](#).

COVID was our most recent challenge, and NATF showed resilience and creativity throughout the pandemic. Our donors continued to contribute, and our programs, though converted from in person to virtual, continued to flourish.

Now, 17 years after helping to establish NATF, I am stepping down as President. It has been a privilege and pleasure to serve. I am proud of what NATF has achieved. NATF will continue to grow and evolve in new and exciting directions under the tutelage of Dr. Ruff, who has been elected as my successor. He will do a spectacular job. I look forward to participating in future programs and continuing to co-lead our Blood Clot Support Group.

Sincerely,  
**Samuel Z. Goldhaber, MD**



## A Message from President-Elect, Dr. Christian Ruff

I am delighted and honored to have been selected to serve as the next President of NATF. Like many of you, I have been part of the NATF family for a long time, having served on the Board of Directors since 2013 and as Co-Chair of the Medical Advisory Board since 2020. I am the Director of General Cardiology at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH) and an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School in Boston. In addition to patient care, I also oversee clinical trials at the TIMI Study Group, a research organization based at BWH. I have a special interest in studying anticoagulant therapies (drugs that prevent clotting; "blood thinners") across the spectrum of cardiovascular disease.

This is an exciting time for the thrombosis field, as there are many important advances on the horizon, such as our ability to use genetics (DNA) to predict who's at risk of developing a blood clot. With our current tools, we often can't determine why some people have a clot and others don't. We've long known that

some patients with rare genetic disorders are at risk for having blood clots, but most patients who have clots don't have genetic conditions. Through major technologic advances, we're now able to scan a person's entire DNA to predict who's at risk for having a blood clot. I believe this will revolutionize our ability to prevent blood clots in the future.

The therapies we have to treat and prevent clots are also evolving. For over half a century, warfarin (Coumadin®, now known as Jantoven®) was our only available blood thinner. Warfarin is effective but carries a risk of serious bleeding. Our newer anticoagulants have a lower risk of serious bleeding, but they still cause some bleeding in general, which is a concern for patients and often leads to stopping the drugs. Currently, there's a new class of blood thinners in clinical trials that has the promise of being much safer with respect to bleeding compared to the current drugs that we use. If the safety is confirmed in trials, these drugs will

## NATF by the Numbers: How We've Grown Since 2006

**1,050,375**

Lives touched by  
NATF in 2022

**30+**

Programs & events  
hosted annually

**91%**

Average virtual program  
satisfaction score



dramatically transform the way that we treat and prevent blood clots.

As the incoming NATF President, I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to work with all of you to help further the organization's mission and build on the amazing foundation that already exists. To support this goal, I'm pleased to announce that we're in the midst of vastly enhancing our digital platform and content. Our goal is to make NATF the premier organization for thrombosis education and to continue to bring patients and healthcare professionals together in the fight against blood clots. I look forward to sharing more exciting developments in the future and am excited to begin my term as NATF's new leader this month.

Sincerely,

**Christian Ruff, MD, MPH**



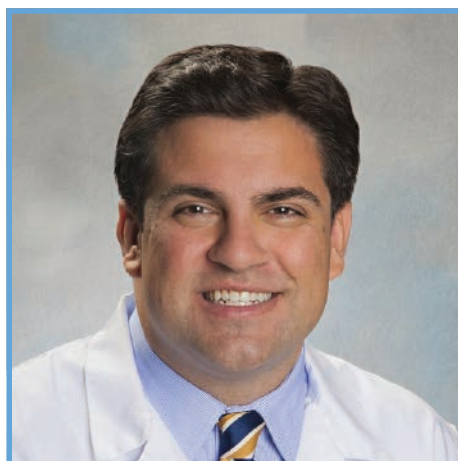
## Reflections from Dr. Gregory Piazza

### Outgoing Chair of Healthcare Provider Engagement & Education

It's been a true honor to help further the educational mission of NATF under the leadership of Dr. Goldhaber. I would like to thank the organization, the Board, the Medical Advisory Board, and the

staff for such a rich and rewarding opportunity over the past 15 years. It is time for me to step aside and allow new voices to champion the mission of NATF and improve cardiovascular and thrombosis care for all. I look forward to watching the organization continue to flourish under new leadership and am certain that NATF will achieve great heights in its next phase of growth and development.

**- Gregory Piazza, MD, MS**



## Introducing Dr. Nathan Connell

### Incoming Chair of Healthcare Provider Engagement & Education

I am a hematologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital, where I focus on clinical disorders of thrombosis (blood clots) and hemostasis (stopping and preventing bleeding). I am also the Chief of Medicine at Brigham and Women's Faulkner Hospital, the Associate Director of the Boston Hemophilia Center, and an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. I've been affiliated with NATF for several years as a faculty member for clinician education. Most recently, I co-authored NATF's recently published *Action Initiative*, "[Assessing and Address-](#)

[ing the Risk of Venous Thromboembolism \(VTE\) Across the Spectrum of Gender-Affirming Care.](#)"

As the incoming Chair of Healthcare Provider Engagement & Education, I look forward to partnering with NATF's staff and colleagues to develop new programs, recruit a diverse array of faculty, and think about innovative ways to deliver medical education content. Like Dr. Ruff, I'm especially excited about the new medications on the horizon for the treatment of blood clots and how they'll be implemented in clinical practice moving forward.

**- Nathan Connell, MD, MPH**

## NATF by the Numbers: How We've Grown Since 2006

**72,000+**

Healthcare professionals in the NATF database from the fields of cardiovascular medicine, internal medicine, hematology and more

**55,000**

Patients receiving education each month through our website, support groups, social media, and educational programs

**50,000**

Average number of site visitors a month



## Meet Tara Lech, PharmD

### Co-Chair-Elect, NATF Medical Advisory Board

I am a clinical pharmacist who specializes in cardiovascular medicine and anticoagulation management. I'm currently the Director of Anticoagulation Services for Beth Israel Lahey



Tara Lech and the NATF staff | From left to right: Aviva Schwartz, Tara, Kathryn Mikkelsen, Maggie Newberg, and Courtney Anderson.

Health, a large health system based in Massachusetts, and I'm very excited to be the incoming Co-Chair for the NATF Medical Advisory Board! I've worked with this organization for many years and love that they always put the patient first.

While in this new role, I hope to continue to be a voice for our patients, while spreading awareness about blood clots and helping to identify new opportunities for education. I'm looking forward to working together to improve patient care and the management of blood clots.

## Upcoming Patient Events

### Support Group for Newly Diagnosed Patients

*Hosted by Joelle Hochman, RRT,  
Chair of Patient Engagement &  
Education*

We're pleased to offer a virtual support group experience specifically for patients who've recently had a blood clot.\*

April 20, 2023

May 18, 2023

**All meetings start at 7:00 PM EST**

\*This group is primarily geared towards patients who've had a blood clot in the past 12 months – but participants at any stage of diagnosis are welcome! If you're a longtime reader of *The Beat*, please help us spread the word about this support group! More information can be found on our website.



### NATF Support Group

This virtual support group is designed for patients at all stages of their blood clot journey. If you had your blood clot 20 days ago or 20 years ago, we welcome you to join us!

May 16, 2023

June 13, 2023

**All meetings start at 7:00 PM EST**

**To register for these programs, please visit Patient Events on our website at <https://thrombosis.org/events/patients/>**



Fighting blood clots  
through education

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Treasurer

Director of Pharmacy Business and Financial Services Brigham and Women's Hospital • Assistant Professor of Clinical Pharmacy Practice Northeastern University, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy

#### Jawed Fareed, PhD

Co-Chair, Research & Science

Director, Hemostasis and Thrombosis Research Laboratories | Loyola University Medical Center • Professor of Pathology and Pharmacology | Loyola University Medical Center

#### Joelle Hochman, RRT

Chair, Patient Engagement & Education

Founder and Lead Respiratory Therapist Pulmonary Health Coaching • Patient Navigator, The Lung Center, Brigham and Women's Hospital

#### Gregory Piazza, MD, MS

Chair, Healthcare Provider Engagement & Education

Staff Physician, Division of Cardiovascular Medicine Section Head, Vascular Medicine Brigham and Women's Hospital • Associate Professor of Medicine Harvard Medical School

#### Christian Ruff, MD, MPH

Co-Chair, Medical Advisory Board

Associate Physician, Cardiovascular Medicine Division Brigham and Women's Hospital • Associate Professor of Medicine Harvard Medical School

#### Jelena Spyropoulos, PhD

Chair, Corporate Partnerships

Clinical Strategy Lead Medscape Education Global

### STAFF

#### Kathryn Mikkelsen, MBA

Executive Director

[KMikkelsen@thrombosis.org](mailto:KMikkelsen@thrombosis.org)

#### Courtney Anderson

Director of Operations

[CJohnson@thrombosis.org](mailto:CJohnson@thrombosis.org)

#### Aviva Schwartz, MA

Director, Content & Education  
Co-Chair, Medical Advisory Board

[ASchwartz@thrombosis.org](mailto:ASchwartz@thrombosis.org)

#### Maggie Newberg

Director of Marketing

[MNewberg@thrombosis.org](mailto:MNewberg@thrombosis.org)

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