How a retired endocrinologist found a new way to help patients

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Ved V. Gossain, MD, is like a lot of senior physicians. A recent retiree, he wants to enjoy his golden years but he doesn’t want to give up his calling altogether—especially given how badly he’s needed.

“There are many rural areas that don’t have a single doctor in my specialty,” said Dr. Gossain, an endocrinologist who splits his time between teaching at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine and vacationing in Florida. “Upper Michigan, for example, probably has one endocrinologist, maybe two.”

Dr. Gossain chairs the AMA Senior Physicians Section, which gives voice to and advocates on issues that impact senior physicians, who may be working full time or part time or be retired. In honor of Older Americans Month, the AMA celebrates senior physician members in the month of May.

When a colleague recently gave him a heads-up that he could volunteer with the MAVEN Project, a nonprofit that connects retired and semiretired physician specialists with safety-net clinics and community health centers across the country to provide medical consultation, mentoring and education, Dr. Gossain jumped at the opportunity.

“To me, primary care is the hardest specialty,” said Dr. Gossain, an AMA member. “I can limit myself to endocrinology and get by. The cardiologist can limit himself or herself to the heart situation and get by. But the primary care physician, they have to know about the heart, the lungs, the joints, you name it.”

A workforce multiplier

MAVEN is short for Medical Alumni Volunteer Expert Network. The project was founded in 2014 to help improve safety-net access to specialty care. The project has nearly 300 partner sites in 21 states and Puerto Rico, and its roster of volunteers numbers more than 160 from over 60 specialties. Volunteer physicians need only be licensed in one state.
Clinicians at partner sites enjoy unlimited e-consults, which can be done synchronously or asynchronously. The MAVEN Project says its average turnaround time on an e-consult request is less than 10 hours.

Dr. Gossain is one of the newest volunteers at the MAVEN Project, having just sat in on his first discussion of a problematic case with other volunteer endocrinologists at the time of his interview with the AMA.

“To keep my clinical skills up and also give something back to the community for no remuneration, I think this is almost a perfect match. I can do one e-consult a day or one e-consult a month,” Dr. Gossain said, noting that he will be especially busy over the coming weeks because of the 2023 AMA Annual Meeting.

“Most doctors don't want to be fully occupied one day and then have nothing to do the next; everybody needs a transition, and sometimes the transition can be slow,” he said. “What attracted me to the MAVEN Project is it allows me to continue to practice and, in the process, help primary care physicians deliver care so patients don't have to travel a hundred miles or more to see an endocrinology colleague of mine—if they can see one at all.”