Emergency departments must be led by physicians

JUN 13, 2023

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Fighting scope creep is a critical component of the AMA Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians—it’s also a focus of delegates at the 2023 AMA Annual Meeting in Chicago.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services regulations require that, for a hospital to provide emergency care, all emergency departments must be directed by a qualified medical staff member.

The House of Delegates directed the AMA to advocate for the establishment and enforcement of legislation or regulations that ensure only physicians supervise the provision of emergency care services in an emergency department.

The AMA also will collaborate with relevant stakeholders including state and specialty societies to oppose legislation or regulation allowing pharmacists to test, diagnose and treat medical conditions—a scope-of-practice expansion that was introduced in 17 states.

Move for stronger regulation

The House of Delegates also strengthened existing policy and issued a call for certified nurse practitioners, certified registered nurse anesthetists, certified nurse midwives and clinical nurse specialists to be licensed and regulated jointly by the state medical and nursing boards.

Lastly, delegates directed the AMA to study the movement of nonphysician health professionals—such as physician assistants and nurse practitioners—between specialties.

Patients deserve care led by physicians—the most highly educated, trained and skilled health professionals. The AMA vigorously defends the practice of medicine against scope-of-practice expansions that threaten patient safety.

Read about the other highlights from the 2023 AMA Annual Meeting.