

AMA Academic Physicians Section: 40 years shaping medical education

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In 1976, the average cost of a new home was \$43,400, Apple Computer Inc. was established, and an important group in medical education was just getting started.

A notable history

The AMA Academic Physicians Section (APS) is celebrating its 40th anniversary this month, and physicians who were a part of the group in its early years can tell of its strong history in shaping medical education and the practice of medicine.

From its beginning as the AMA Section on Medical Schools, this group of physician educators had high aspirations.

Within a few years of its founding, the section had played an important role in contributing to the “Future directions of medical education” report adopted by the AMA in 1982 and began a series of medical education conferences with the AMA Council on Medical Education, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and the American Hospital Association.

Myron Genel, MD, professor emeritus of pediatrics and senior research scientist at Yale Child Health Research Center and Yale School of Medicine and a clinical professor of nursing at the Yale School of Nursing, recounts that the work of the section and the AMA Council on Scientific Affairs in the mid-1980s led to a joint effort with the AAMC that culminated in the Graylyn Clinical Research Summit.

The summit in turn led directly to the formation of the Clinical Research Roundtable at the Institute of Medicine and enhancement of the National Institutes of Health’s clinical research program.

In the early 1990s, the section began participating in a series of conferences with the Society of

Directors of Research in Medical Education and produced a report on the potential impact health system reform would have on medical education.

Moving into the 2000s, the section was instrumental in the AMA's collaboration with the AAMC on the Initiative to Transform Medical Education, which included the 2010 New Horizons in Medical Education conference.

More recently, the section has been involved in the AMA's Accelerating Change in Medical Education initiative, which awarded \$11 million in grants to 11 leading medical schools for major medical education innovations in 2013. These schools have made tremendous progress in creating the medical school of the future and transforming physician training.

This year, 21 additional medical schools joined these 11 founding members of the AMA's Accelerating Change in Medical Education Consortium to continue spreading innovative medical education ideas. An estimated 19,000 medical students—18 percent of all U.S. allopathic and osteopathic students—study at a consortium school.

Representing the continuum of medical education

While the section is very active in undergraduate medical education, its work isn't limited to what takes place in medical school. The section instituted a new membership category back in 1996 to ensure the section encompassed graduate medical education (GME) and continuing medical education as well.

Just last year, the section officially changed its name to the AMA Academic Physicians Section to better reflect this commitment to shaping the full continuum of medical education.

"The transition from the AMA Section on Medical Schools to the AMA Academic Physicians Section symbolizes and codifies our commitment to inclusiveness for all those who educate our students and house staff," said Kenneth Simons, MD, senior associate dean for GME and accreditation at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Throughout its four decades, the section has introduced and influenced AMA policy.

"This section is a strong advocate of medical education at undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels," said Surendra Varma, MD, executive associate dean for GME and resident affairs and the Ted Hartman Endowed Chair in Medical Education, university distinguished professor and vice-chair of Pediatrics at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine.

Members of the AMA Academic Physicians Section also view their work as a service to the full

medical education community. The section “influence[s] policy in order to help faculty in our academic institutions do their jobs with more efficiency and satisfaction,” said George Mejicano, MD, professor of medicine and senior associate dean for education at Oregon Health and Sciences University. The school is one of the founding members of the Accelerating Change in Medical Education Consortium, and Dr. Mejicano is the principal investigator of the school’s consortium project.

Cynda Ann Johnson, MD, president and founding dean of Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, encourages all academic physicians to get involved in the section. “It matters,” Dr. Johnson said. “The AMA takes its role in shaping medical education seriously, and it has political clout.”

Over the years, the section has introduced 173 resolutions on important matters, including expansion of medical schools, faculty development, physician workforce, duty hours, maintenance of certification, resident and student rotations and challenges of primary care.

“There has been a tremendous wealth in important topics that we address in our individual institutions and in our daily work,” M. Dewayne Andrews, MD, executive dean of the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine, told physicians during a special lecture in honor of the section’s anniversary, named after its founder John Chapman, MD.

“Physicians need a strong voice to advocate for our patients and our profession. The AMA Academic Physicians Section can and should be that voice,” said Maria C. Savoia, MD, dean for medical education and professor of medicine at the University of California–San Diego School of Medicine.

The section also gives members key roles to play beyond the AMA.

“Membership in the AMA Academic Physicians Section is an avenue toward nomination for important national committees in education and practice, such as the LCME, ACGME and RRCs,” said Betty Drees, MD, professor and dean emerita at the University of Missouri–Kansas City School of Medicine. “This is a way for faculty from all institutions to get involved at a national level to have input and also to provide avenues for career advancement. This type of service counts toward promotion guidelines in most institutions, but also gives participants the opportunity to build networks of colleagues.”

If you’re not yet a member of the AMA Academic Physicians Section, now is an exciting time to join your colleagues in this important work. The next meeting of the section will take place Nov. 11 in Seattle.