

# When good work is acknowledged, we aspire to work harder

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In a time of unprecedented change in medicine, the AMA has evolved to become a more nimble, responsive and forward-thinking organization that better prepares physicians for the unique challenges of a rapidly evolving health care system, according to an independent study being released this week. Such change is seldom quick or easy, and far too often we fail to pause and reflect on just how far this organization has come.

The international public affairs and communications firm, APCO Worldwide, this week ranked the AMA first in its annual TradeMarks survey of the 50 most effective professional and trade organizations in the U.S., not just in the health care sector but across all industries. In fact, the AMA finished first or second overall in 14 of the 15 leadership characteristics identified by APCO, including advocacy work in Washington D.C., coalition building and partnerships, local impact and effective communications with members, stakeholders and the media.

This is a remarkable achievement that is a credit to the vision established by the AMA's Board of Trustees, its senior management, the AMA employees that advance that vision, but also the tens of thousands of physicians across the country who support the AMA and champion the causes that move our profession forward.

As president of the AMA, I am proud of my colleagues and their tireless work to advance our strategic initiatives to improve health outcomes for patients, professional satisfaction for physicians and create the medical schools of the future.

## No one on the sidelines

At my inauguration in June, I spoke about the power in advocating for our profession and leaving a legacy in medicine that we all could be proud of. And I asked my fellow physicians to get off the sidelines and get involved in these efforts, either through the AMA or their state and specialty societies. Take a stand on the issues that are important to you, your practice and your patients.

Our message is simple: Your opinion matters. Your involvement matters.

Anyone who practices medicine today understands the frustrations that are, unfortunately, driving too many of our most experienced and accomplished colleagues from the profession. We're frustrated by the pace of our jobs, by unnecessary regulations that steal time from our patients, and by EHRs that are inefficient, difficult to use and don't advance the quality of care we are trying to provide. We're frustrated when we feel unsupported by administrators, and by complicated new payment models that seem to have no connection to the real-world demands of our jobs.

The APCO survey is important because it independently validates the efforts of the AMA and physicians like you who lend your time and your voice to make a difference for all of us who practice medicine. You have done so by speaking out against the fatally-flawed Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate and we achieved repeal last year. You've also done so by participating in our Break the Red Tape campaign to fight back against burdensome regulations.

Another fight that physicians have taken on is to help our patients gain access to treatment for substance use disorders and lifesaving medications that prevent overdose. The opioid epidemic is affecting communities across the country no matter their size or location. Our Task Force to Reduce Prescription Opioid Abuse has worked tirelessly to ensure access to naloxone, improve prescription drug monitoring programs and increase their use; and have continued to emphasize that substance use disorder is a brain disease, not a moral failing.

Other physicians have lent their expertise to tech innovators as they design and develop the tools that will one day transform health care, or helped our nation's efforts to reduce chronic disease and opioid abuse and addiction. Some have simply chosen to become members.

For all of you who are already participating in these efforts, I thank you. For those who have not yet joined our ranks, I hope the APCO survey will cause you to look anew at our efforts, and to consider adding your voice to ours.

Let's use the power of our collective voice to create a health care system that works for patients and physicians by removing the obstacles that contribute to so much dissatisfaction and dysfunction. Help us spread the word. Help us bring more of our colleagues to the table.

Never forget that we physicians are the custodians of a marvelous profession and a noble tradition of



healing and ethics. Health care as we know it will not survive unless physicians make professional advocacy a part of our commitment to the profession; a part of our mission.

Let this be the year we capitalize on this momentum by working collaboratively to create a future that supports thriving physicians, expands quality care and strengthens the health of our nation for our patients.