

Physicians are born to care

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There is frequent talk in health care and other circles about what it means to be a “mission-driven organization.” How should that notion affect difficult decisions about staffing, revenue, services and more? Those discussions are hard enough, to be sure. But as physicians, we hold ourselves to what is arguably an even higher standard. We are called to medicine because it is a mission-driven profession.

We are driven to heal the sick, comfort the dying, discover new treatments, gain a better understanding of disease, implement proven practices and teach tomorrow’s physicians to stand on the shoulders of giants and make their own marks in medicine. We were born to care.

That is our mission as physicians.

Together, physicians and the AMA are called to promote the art and science of medicine and the betterment of the public health. We are driven to improve patients’ access to care and to shape the health system so that it protects the well-being of physicians and the care we deliver. The AMA is devoted to helping you answer the call to care for patients, and we are driven to create resources to meet your life and career needs at every stage.

That is our mission at the AMA.

We know what physicians want because we have been talking with you. The AMA confirmed through robust research with widely respected partners that electronic health records (EHR) are depriving you of the time with patients that you value so highly, and that patient care above all drives your professional satisfaction. And a new survey of 1,200 medical students, residents and physicians demonstrates that, despite the challenges of contemporary medical practice, the commitment to a career in medicine as a way to help people is deeply rooted.

For too many doctors, their biggest problems have little to do with the puzzles of diagnosis and treatment. More than 60 percent of residents and physicians in our survey said “administrative

burden” is one of the top three challenges they face.

Well, your burdens are our burdens. That is why we are working with health insurers to remove the prior-authorization requirements that gobble up physician and staff time and delay patients’ access to care. That is why we are making available more evidence-based tools to help you redesign your practice to improve care and reduce stress and strain.

The survey found that 82 percent of physicians are motivated to continue their careers in medicine because they want to help people. That is the simple, unvarnished truth. And when most other teenagers were mostly focused on getting a driver’s license, you felt the stirrings of medicine as your life’s mission. Nearly half of all respondents said they realized as teenagers that they wanted to become physicians.

Nearly 30 percent knew by the age of 12 that doctoring would be their path. For many other physicians, the inspiration to join medicine comes later in life. Yet whenever that spark of recognition arrives, many physicians say it feels as though it was always there.

You were born to do this. And the AMA, from its founding in 1847, was born to help physicians pursue their personal mission, with heads held aloft in the knowledge that the individual patient’s welfare is the paramount concern and protecting public health the ultimate goal.

I recall clearly the moment I felt medicine as my calling. In the sixth grade, I was hospitalized for an extended period with a serious illness. It was then I knew that, if I could, I wanted to help others get well and stay well. And today, in my role at the AMA, I feel called to make the most of the wonderful opportunity we have before us—to meet the needs of the nation’s physicians through our ongoing work.

In the months ahead, through our comprehensive brand initiative, you will see us striving to demonstrate to physicians, residents and medical students the many ways the AMA listens, supports and empowers you to succeed throughout your unique journeys with timely and relevant resources. Our intent is to recognize and celebrate the core reasons that physicians choose the profession, while also highlighting the broad array of initiatives and resources the AMA provides in support of your mission.

We understand the challenges you face and we are working to address them, so you can focus on what many of you feel you were born to do—care for your patients. We at the AMA are inspired by your tireless commitment to providing care, to your profession and to your mission. That is worth celebrating every day.