

Beyond chaotic moment, AMA's CEO foresees innovation's impact

NOV 12, 2017

Andis Robeznieks

Senior News Writer

A “natural convener of ideas and objectives” is needed to solve the legislative, policy and technological challenges facing physicians and the nation’s health system. AMA Executive Vice President and CEO James L. Madara, MD, knows an organization perfect for that role.

“That’s us,” he said during Saturday’s opening session of the 2017 AMA Interim Meeting in Honolulu.

Dr. Madara added that physicians “need to seize” a more central part in shaping health care’s future, and he spoke of how the AMA has fulfilled this mission in the past by creating the *AMA Code of Medical Ethics* and leading a public campaign against smoking.

“The history of the AMA is intertwined with the history of American medicine,” Dr. Madara said, noting how the AMA is working to shape the health policy decisions of the present.

“Our voice is a mitigating force for national chaos that we seem to tilt toward as of late,” Dr. Madara said.

“The AMA’s critical work to stem the waterfall of disturbing legislative health care proposals rightly occupied much of our time and effort.”

The Association’s “principled” advocacy on this front “exemplified strong leadership in medicine.”

But Dr. Madara's speech focused mostly on the AMA's role in leading the future of medicine and meeting the longer-term needs of patients and physicians.

Making sense of disconnected data

Specifically, he described the AMA’s Integrated Health Model Initiative (IHMI), which will assemble

data elements into a “meaningful conceptualization of the patient’s state,” along with a Health2047 spinoff project that could serve as a utility for health data movement similar to a city’s power grid or water supply.

“We confront oceans and oceans of data, but only puddles of clinical meaning,” Dr. Madara said while describing how relevant patient information is lost in “an ocean of disconnected data points” that lack context and organization.

Launched just last month after two years of development, health care and technology stakeholders can use IHMI to work together to address data needs around costly and burdensome areas such as hypertension, diabetes and asthma. The initiative aims to support a continuous learning environment to enable interoperable technology solutions and care models that evolve with real-world use and feedback.

The IHMI platform brings health and technology sectors together around a common data model, aiming to create a framework for organizing data across health care. It seeks to provide a shared framework for organizing health data, emphasizing patient-centric information and data elements most predictive of achieving better outcomes, goals and wellness for patients.

Dr. Madara said the AMA is collaborating on IHMI with partners such as IBM Watson, Intermountain Healthcare, Cerner and the American Heart Association to create a data solution that will do three things for physicians:

- | Deliver at the point of care better-organized and more relevant information about patients, including their goals and social determinants of health.
- | Create collaborative digital communities to identify costly clinical burdens and identify solutions through a neutral, physician-led validation process.
- | Achieve interoperability by establishing a common data model that can be easily shared across health systems and allow the data elements of one vendor’s EHR to be translated to another.

Fast, safe health data sharing

Two years ago, the AMA also launched its Health2047 innovation lab in Silicon Valley, where its project SWITCH is attracting attention from senior leaders and engineers from companies such General Electric and Intel, Dr. Madara said.

The project’s aim is to create a “data liquidity system,” which Dr. Madara described as “an inexpensive pipeline for data flow.” SWITCH could bring to the health care sector the kind of rapid sharing Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) has enabled in the

financial system, he said.

“SWITCH is a subscriber network that enables secure, permissions-based sharing of health data among patients, physicians, payers and others in health care and technology,” he said.

These “transformative” tools will undergo further development over the next two to four years, Dr. Madara said.

The AMA’s immediate work as well as its longer-term projects jointly aim to extract physicians from their “mind-numbing administrative and data-entry chores.” They can achieve that by “flipping” the health care development model so that it recognizes physicians as the industry’s “knowledge force” and have development start at the patient-physician interface rather than at the administrative level.

“We are the ones leading entrepreneurs and industry to the pain points in health care,” Dr. Madara concluded. “We are the ones responsible for creating a system that continuously promotes the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health.”

Read more news coverage from the 2017 AMA Interim Meeting.

More on this

- | Physicians work to shape digital innovation a Health 2.0
- | Mayo, AMA CEOs urge: Seek physicians as innovation partners
- | AMA’s vigor, vision spread across all areas of medicine: AMA CEO