

Karen Dionesotes, MPH: A love of science, a passion for patients

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Staff News Writer



The AMA "Members Move Medicine" series profiles a wide variety of doctors, offering a glimpse into the passions of women and men navigating new courses in American medicine.

On the move with: Karen Dionesotes, MPH, a medical student in Omaha, Nebraska, who is vice chair of the AMA Medical Student Section Governing Council. Her specialty of interest is psychiatry.

AMA member since: 2013.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: I've always been interested in science, but it was my experiences working with underserved patients during my undergrad education that really drew me to a career in medicine.

The physician-patient relationship is incredibly special, and it is a privilege to be let into such an intimate part of people's lives. I knew that I could get up every day to work if it meant continuing to have those relationships.

How I move medicine: By being an active member within our American Medical Association, I help move medicine by being active in policy and advocacy. After my first national AMA Medical Student Section meeting, I was awestruck by how knowledgeable and professional my MSS colleagues were, and knew that I wanted to follow suit.

I've spent the past five years writing resolutions, participating in advocacy events nationally and locally, and working with medical students across the country to understand the importance of organized medicine.

How I have given back: I took two years off from my medical education to pursue a Master of Public Health and then to spend a year working for Maryland Medicaid. I believe that caring for people at a population level is crucial to helping fix some of the problems within our health care system.

Although it was uncommon at my medical school to take any gap years, this was truly the best path for me, and I highly recommend that medical students not be afraid to take risks!

Advice I'd give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: Working in health care and within the most intimate parts of people's lives is a true privilege. What is so great about working in health care is that there are so many different roles that a person can take. From being a physician to a speech pathologist, occupational therapist, public health practitioner or health-law provider—you do not need to be clinical to be involved in health care and help better patients' lives. Be sure to explore all the options out there!

Aspect of my work that means the most: I really value the time that I spend with my patients getting to know them outside of what brought them to the clinic or hospital. I've learned so much



about life, just from listening to the stories that patients tell me about their lives. It is these interactions and relationships that continue to push me to be the best that I can for my patients.

Learn more about AMA members who are relentlessly moving medicine through advocacy, education, patient care and practice innovation, and join or renew today.