



Rohit Abraham: Making a difference as a med student

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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: Rohit Abraham, a medical student who is taking a one-year leave from medical training between the third and fourth years to complete a master's degree in public health at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

AMA member since: 2014.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: Before medical school, I was first a teacher—I taught ninth-grade biology in a low-income Detroit public school through Teach For America. I realized that you simply can't teach kids who aren't there, and the most common reason my kids were absent was to babysit younger siblings because a family member was hospitalized for undiagnosed or untreated chronic disease. This understanding inspired me to train both in medicine and in public health to serve urban, underserved populations.

How I move medicine: I sit on a couple nonprofit health boards (including my state medical society), advocate for issues I care about on Capitol Hill, and regularly volunteer with community engagement efforts to address the opioid crisis. These things help create balance in my own life, especially since they help me feel like I'm making a difference outside the four walls of the hospital or clinic.

Career highlights: As a second-year medical student at Michigan State University College of Medicine, I had the wonderful surprise of receiving the AMA Foundation Excellence in Medicine Leadership Award for my early engagement with organized medicine and for public health initiatives at home and abroad in India.

I am also incredibly thankful to have been a 2017–2018 awardee of the Zuckerman Fellowship, which is a public service merit award that fully funded my Master of Public Health degree through Harvard's Center for Public Leadership.

I have been proud to give back to my community this year through service to Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, which paired me up with an amazing third-grader named Temi. We spent a year together building a mentorship relationship by conducting fun science experiments, building robotic Lego projects, and learning advanced math for travel competitions.

Advice I'd give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: Some of the best advice I ever got during medical school was to spend your free time doing the kinds of things you would do if you already had the "MD" after your name. Whether that's advocacy, volunteerism or community leadership, there's nothing stopping you from doing these things today! Medical students have a lot more power and public trust than most people realize. It's up to us to put that influence to good use and to make our community a better place.

Aspect of my work that means the most: At the end of the day, the one-to-one relationships I get to build with my patients mean more to me than anything else in my career. Medicine is the most fulfilling career in the world because you have the privilege of talking with people in their most vulnerable moments, which you have the unique expertise to address and resolve to help build stronger, healthier communities. I'm incredibly lucky to be in this field, and every day of training is worth it to be able to serve my patients.

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