



Capt. Harold J. Rothenberg II, MD: The medical answer man

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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: Capt. Harold J. Rothenberg II, MD, a retired physician who worked first as a pathologist and then as a family doctor. He also served as a medical officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

AMA member since: 1968.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: To learn human about health and illness and the tremendous amount of good that can come from making a correct diagnosis early, when treatment can be most effective. It is my small part of repairing the world.

How I move medicine: By inviting patients and families into the care and cure of their illnesses and problems. The more they understand, the better the outcome will be. I take the time to explain, not just act. By teaching the next generation of students to be better than my generation, and most of all by welcoming them into our profession.

Career highlights: I pursued three very diverse specialties—pathology, family medicine even emergency medicine—to gain the widest possible perspective on what can be done to detect, diagnose, help, cure, comfort. I try very hard to meet patients on their cultural, intellectual and vocabulary territory. I am especially proud of being recognized as a teacher, when students say, “He can explain anything to anybody.”

Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: Be honest, above all. Be prepared to study hard and work hard; you carry your tools in your brain, not in a box. Remember that what you do may affect the entire remainder of a patient’s and family’s life.

Aspect of my work that means the most: The sudden recognition—epiphany or “aha!” moment—by a student or patient, that what I have said, taught or done has helped them understand something that will help them for their entire life or career. The ability to give back. America has been good to me and my family.

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