

# AMA puts its organizational muster behind health equity push

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The AMA House of Delegates (HOD) adopted policy setting “health equity” as a goal for a U.S. health system beset by disparities in delivery and outcomes that affect racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and other patient populations that often lack political, social or economic power.

“We believe all Americans should have access to affordable and meaningful health care,” said AMA Board Member Willarda V. Edwards, MD, MBA. “There are myriad reasons for health disparities and health inequity, including juvenile justice, bias, stereotyping, prejudice and clinical uncertainty, to the fact that chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension disproportionately affect minority populations.

“We know that overwhelmingly, America’s physician workforce entered the field driven by a desire to help people,” Dr. Edwards added. “By stepping back, cutting through the rhetoric and working collaboratively, we can ensure meaningful access to care for all Americans and improve the health of our nation.”

The Association’s action, taken at the 2018 AMA Annual Meeting in Chicago, reflects delegates’ agreement with the proposed recommendations of a Health Equity Task Force that was formed in response to a previous HOD resolution.

Delegates adopted new policy saying that:

- Health equity, defined as optimal health for all, is a goal toward which our AMA will work by advocating for health care access, research and data collection, promoting equity in care, increasing health workforce diversity, influencing determinants of health, and voicing and modeling commitment to health equity.

Delegates directed the AMA to:

- Develop an organizational unit, e.g., a center or its equivalent, to facilitate, coordinate, initiate and track AMA health equity activities.

According to the body of the report the HOD adopted, the strategic framework for the AMA activity should be to:

- Advocate for health care access for all.
- Promote equity in care.
- Increase health workforce diversity and cultural awareness or competency.
- Influence determinants of health.
- Voice and model commitment to health equity.

Delegates also directed the AMA Board of Trustees to provide an annual report to the HOD “regarding AMA’s health equity activities and achievements.”

## **Another forum for LGBTQ issues**

In another action indicative of the AMA’s commitment to diversity and inclusion, delegates voted to establish a section council on LGBTQ Health. The new section council’s aim is to give the LGBTQ community and its allies throughout the HOD a forum within which various like-minded entities and individuals can achieve consensus on subjects of mutual interest.

The section council does not displace the AMA Advisory Committee on LGBTQ Issues.

Read more news coverage from the 2018 AMA Annual Meeting.