

Nara Tashjian: A full schedule of learning and activism

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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: Nara Tashjian, a fourth-year medical student and MBA candidate in Omaha, Nebraska, with sights set on a career in general surgery.

AMA member since: 2014.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: Its unique opportunity to serve and interact with patients while using an ever-evolving foundation of knowledge. I love the challenges new patients represent, paired with the autonomy of practice.

How I move medicine: I am an advocate for my patients and fellow medical students. Many physicians and students have opinions about patient care and medical education, yet few speak up. If we do not use our voice and talk to representatives on the state and local level, our educated opinions fall to the wayside.

The AMA has been a vessel that allows future medical professionals to use their voice, share their experiences and make an impact. Through the AMA, I have had the opportunity to work with representatives on state and local levels. Advocacy is a great skill to start early and the AMA Medical Student Section is a great platform.

This past year, I have had the opportunity to serve as the chair of the AMA-MSS Committee on Medical Education. Students come together from around the country and discuss medical education, comparing and contrasting our schools with recent research. We turn our discussion into policy. Just this year, we passed a resolution about inclusiveness for medical students with disabilities.

Career highlights: When I entered medical school, I realized I did not understand about the cost of medicine and how health care spending makes up about 18 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product. I decided to pursue an MD/MBA dual degree.

I also worked for a health care system’s clinical integration network. One of the things I learned is that there is a lack of data power. For a system that spends so much time putting information into EHRs, we get little data output. Graduating with my dual degree, I hope to work toward increasing data power in the medical practice, linking cost of care to outcomes while working to decrease the actualized cost.

I am proud of my work with my school’s student-run free clinic placed in Omaha’s largest homeless shelter. I spent two years as a director and currently am an advisor for the clinic. We serve around 1,500 patients a year and provide them with free services and medications. And every year I participate in a medical mission trip to Armenia. Being half Armenian, it is a wonderful way to give

back while connecting with my roots.

Advice I'd give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: Do it! Health care is a long and daunting trek, but it is one of the most rewarding careers. Even as a medical student, you have the opportunity to interact with patients and have an impact on care. Your patients also will have an impact on you, changing the way you practice. I have patients that I will never forget. Yes, it is hard and you don't get a paycheck for a while, but in the end it's worth it.

Aspect of my work that means the most: Patients. I know you always hear about how little time surgeons spend with patients, but that's simply not true. You get to be with patients at hard times and work with them through those times. By educating worried patients about procedures, you can comfort them. That's what I love most about medicine.

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