Members Move Medicine: Leading a team-based care transformation

JUL 13, 2018

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: James Jerzak, MD, family physician in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He is the physician lead of team-based care at Bellin Health Ashwaubenon.
AMA member since: 1981.

How I move medicine: By taking an active role in advancing team-based care. We get a lot of outreach from different systems and we want to do our best to spread the word. There’s just so much interest. We sometimes ask ourselves, “Why are we doing this?” The reason is we really believe this is a solution for what’s the problem with health care delivery now. It is for the greater good, and trying to get people to create a system that is going to be better for the patients and the providers.

Moving medicine really means addressing the problems in health care delivery that we’re having and a part of that is burnout, but there is a lot more to that too with patient care. Burnout is a big part of it, but we learned early on in the process that the focus for our transformation was not just burnout—it had to be improving population health. It was a big debate at the beginning of our process, and eventually we all became believers. Team-based care is just a means to the end of improving population health.

Aspect of my work that means the most: Team-based care definitely does—and I’ve been practicing 80 percent too, so it’s like two full-time jobs. In the context of a busy clinical practice, it is definitely moving us forward and is the most meaningful right now. To juggle this work, No. 1, the empty nest helps. I could never have done it with kids at home. And then the long winters!

Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: We have some medical students in our practice. What I always tell them is: “You’re in the middle of a busy day seeing 20–30 patients, and you just want to get through this patient to get on to the next. You have to remember that for that patient, they’re probably going to remember that visit for the rest of their life. So you really have to make every visit matter. You can’t ever take a visit off. You have to be fully engaged for each visit. Just be aware that for patients it is a big deal to come and see a doctor.”

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