

Shilpen Patel, MD: “A chance to make a difference every day”

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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: Shilpen Patel, MD, radiation oncologist at Grail, a Menlo Park, California-based company specializing in early cancer detection.

AMA member since: 1998.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: It gave me a chance to combine my interest in improving my surroundings while at the same time pursuing lifelong learning, satisfying my curiosity to explore and perform research, providing opportunities to teach, and having a chance to make a difference every day.

How I move medicine: By advocating for all my patients while at the same time performing research and developing technology to improve health care on a large scale.

Career highlights: They include winning the AMA Foundation Leadership Award in 2009 and being the youngest fellow of the American Society for Radiation Oncology. I am also the past chair of the AMA Young Physicians Section and current chair of the AMA Advisory Committee on LGBTQ Issues.

Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: Medicine will continue to change and sometimes evolve or devolve. It takes a special person to be able to ride the highs and the lows of pursuing medicine. If you are committed to lifelong learning, humility, and willing to be vulnerable often, medicine may be right for you.

Aspect of my work that means the most: Building relationships is what bring me joy in the work I do. Through these, I can understand what is important to those around me and in my clinic. This ultimately helps me figure out how to help and make the biggest impact.

How I advocate for physicians and patients: I believe it is important to roll up your sleeves and give back to the people around you and invest in the community. My parents taught me at a young age how important it is to volunteer your time to help with community projects and make a difference at the local, state, national and global levels.

My hope for the future of medicine: Medicine is changing at such a rapid pace. Health care providers are struggling to keep up. I am hopeful that we will be able to create innovative solutions to make it easier for physicians to practice and improve the care we provide to our patients.

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