

Hoyt Burdick, MD: Power of team collaboration never changes

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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: Hoyt J. Burdick, MD, a pulmonologist and chief medical officer at Cabell Huntington Hospital in Huntington, West Virginia. He also specializes in internal medicine and critical care.

AMA member since: 1977.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: A group of remarkable physicians and surgeons who were caring for my mother during her struggle to survive terminal brain cancer. Their level of commitment, dedication to the practice of medicine and heroic efforts to save a young mother’s life inspired me to want to be just like them.

How I move medicine: For the first half of my career, I moved medicine in the Critical Care Unit by chasing the continually evolving standards of evidence-based practice. I watched much of what we thought we knew about hemodynamic monitoring and ventilator management change completely. What never changed was the power of team collaboration at the bedside.

Now, in the second half of my career, I move medicine by engaging with my medical staff, hospital administration, and 212 residents and fellows on a journey towards high reliability and zero avoidable harm.

Career highlights: I have been able to advocate for my patients’ interests and my fellow physicians as an active member of the AMA at multiple levels—from my county medical society and my state medical association to our AMA delegation. Most recently, I advocated for patients, physicians and our organized medical staff at a different level as a member of the AMA Organized Medical Staff Section Governing Council.

Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: For those who may ask what they can get out of pursuing a career in health care, I would tell them they have asked the wrong question. As William Osler would restate the proposition, “We are here to add what we can to life, not to get what we can from life.” In no other profession are there so many opportunities to add to the life of others while enriching our own.

Aspect of my work that means the most: The most meaningful aspect of my work as a physician is that feeling at the end of the day that my caring and my work have made a difference in someone else’s life—and by God’s grace, I’ll get up and do it again tomorrow.



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