

# Laura E. Halpin, MD: Serving for her resident colleagues

NOV 1, 2018

**Staff News Writer**

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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:** Laura E. Halpin, MD, a psychiatry resident at the University of California, Los Angeles, Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Behavior.

**AMA member since:** 2008.

**What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine:** I’ve always enjoyed science and working with people. Medicine offered the opportunity as a career that is both intensely challenging and meaningful.

**How I move medicine:** As a psychiatry resident, I am learning to diagnose and treat patients with mental illness. This allows me to work to understand and help some of the most vulnerable people in our society to enable them to reach their goals and improve their quality of life. I am also an active member of the AMA, working to more broadly support our patients and our profession—especially fellow residents and other trainees.

**Career highlights:** Serving on the AMA Resident and Fellow Section (AMA-RFS) governing council as vice speaker, a position that allows me to facilitate the voice of the AMA-RFS assembly and also working with our AMA team to organize the Annual Research Symposium.

I am also chair of the Resident and Fellow Section for the California Medical Association and a member of the California Medical Association Council on Science and Public Health. I also serve as a delegate to the AMA House of Delegates from the Section Council on Psychiatry.

I’m also fortunate to have recently been accepted to the American Psychiatric Association and American Psychiatric Association Foundation’s Leadership Fellowship for the next two years. I look forward to learning to be better advocate for my patients and psychiatry.

**Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine:** Learn to be an advocate for your patients and your profession. Trust yourself and work just as hard to learn to stand up for what you believe in as you have been working to master medical knowledge; advocacy is an essential skill in medicine. Stay focused on providing compassionate patient care and remember your patients are people first.

**How I give back to the community:** I joined the AMA in medical school to stay engaged with medicine while I was completing my PhD, using basic science techniques to study methamphetamine neurotoxicity. Since then, AMA membership has become an essential part of my career as I now understand health policy and advocacy as the final frontier of translational research.

One of my goals as a leader in the AMA is to stay focused on the intersection of science, public health and policy by encouraging researchers to see policy as an avenue for translation of their work to practice, and for policymakers to continue to consider the use of data in our arguments.

**Aspect of my work that means the most:** Working with patients, their support systems, communities and other health professionals in order to help them become more functional and reach their goals. I enjoy working as member of an interdisciplinary team and often feel inspired by the network we can build for each patient to help them recover.

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