

Krystal L. Tomei, MD, MPH: Giving young patients the chance to be kids

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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: Krystal L. Tomei, MD, MPH, who is a pediatric neurosurgeon at Rainbow Babies & Children’s Hospital in Cleveland. She is also a member of the AMA Council on Medical Education and AMA Young Physicians Section.

AMA member since: 2002.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: When I was young, my cousin was injured in a car accident and suffered a traumatic brain injury. I wanted to understand more about his injury and became fascinated with the workings of the human brain. Being a part of a family affected by this event really gave me a perspective of how impactful a physician can be. I try every day to do for other families what my cousin’s physicians did for ours.

How I move medicine: Every day I get the privilege of helping my patients, one patient at a time. I see what these children face both now and in the future. Working with the AMA, I can be a part of something bigger—advocating to improve health care for all of my patients, their families, and future generations. I choose to be a member because an organization can’t speak for me if I don’t make my voice heard.

Career highlights: I received the AMA Foundation Excellence in Medicine Award to recognize my contributions to the profession through my involvement in organized medicine. Working for my profession has been such a big part of my career thus far, it was an honor to be recognized for that.

Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: Love what you do. We meet people during their most vulnerable times, and they trust us to do our best to help them. It becomes easy to let this weigh on you, but every day I’m privileged to be able to have a career I love, and that keeps me at my best.

How I give back to the community: I’ve become involved in several local branches of national organizations intended to raise awareness of some of the diseases that I treat. Locally, these organizations form amazing support groups and communities of patients to remove the feeling of isolation that many of these children face. Nationally, these organizations support research to improve our treatments and raise awareness.

Aspect of my work that means the most: There are few things that are more impactful than the relationships I develop with my patients and their families. I love seeing these children grow up and being able to help them do just that. But to me, the most meaningful part of my work is doing what I can to make sure that regardless of the reason they need me as their neurosurgeon, I also give them the chance to be a kid.

My hope for the future of medicine: I hope that we can continue to impact policies that let physicians get back to focusing on our patients. We have a lot of red tape to get through to remove the mandates and barriers that take up our time and energy, but the more people we have join that effort, the better our chances.

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