

## Avani K. Patel: Improving the culture of medicine

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**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:** Avani K. Patel, who is a fourth-year medical student at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine in Jackson.

**AMA member since:** 2015.

**What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine:** I was always close to my paternal grandfather who was born and raised in India and lived his life as a farmer and philanthropist. Often, people called him the “man of miracles” due to his servant heart. What I remember most and what I will always keep close to my heart is this: Before he passed away, he told me to pursue a career in which I felt the joy he felt helping people. He always said losing yourself in the service of others is the key to happiness. That’s when I knew a career in medicine was perfect for me.

**How I move medicine:** By striving to improve the culture of medicine—one of compassion. Creating a positive environment and empowering those around me is fundamental. If only I can put into words how significant it is to encourage talented individuals all around us—be it colleagues, patients, family, friends—to pursue and advocate for what they are passionate about. For me, it is advocating for patients and colleagues, serving as a leader, and exhibiting true community.

**Career highlights:** Albeit early in my career, I have been fortunate with opportunities to demonstrate my passions for service and advocacy on both a local and national level having served as a regional executive council member in the AMA-MSS and currently serving on the AMA Ambassador Steering Committee and the Membership, Engagement, and Recruitment Standing Committee.

In addition, I am currently serving my second term on the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi State Medical Association and on the Executive Council of the Central Medical Society. I also just completed a one-year term as the Southern Region Chair on the Association of American Medical Colleges Organization of Student Representatives Administrative Board, allowing me to serve as a voice on behalf of students for fifty-plus allopathic institutions and work to address physician burnout, wellness, advocacy, professionalism, and more on a national level. These experiences have provided me with insight on how I can play a central role in patient care outcomes and as a patient advocate.

**Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine:** Medicine is as difficult as it is rewarding, but never forget why you chose to pursue medicine in the first place; only then are we able to empathize with our patients and better treat them. Although the journey isn’t always glamorous, we are in a profession that is entrusted with serving our patients to the best of our abilities and expertise. That is a great honor and a privilege.

**How I give back to the community:** By leading by example. When you are committed to producing

quality outcomes with a positive attitude and encouraging a sense of unity, everything else will fall into place.

**Aspect of my work that means the most:** Compassion in medicine is the most important aspect of my work. Earning the trust of patients and becoming their advocate is the most rewarding part as I believe it is fundamental to our shared humanity. One of my favorite quotes when I need a reminder is this one by Leo Buscaglia, “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

**My hope for the future of medicine:** My hope for the future of medicine is to be one of compassion, respect, and a sense of community for better patient care, more diversity, and a culture for positive change. I believe Maya Angelou said it best, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” My challenge for anyone pursuing medicine is to be the change for your patients with a servant heart.

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