

Aishwarya Thakur: Joining the patient journey to better health

APR 22, 2019

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: Aishwarya Thakur, who is a second-year medical student at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine.

AMA member since: 2017.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: I’ve always been interested in why people act the way they do—their feelings and behaviors, and their interactions with the people and institutions around them. As different as we all are—we’re also all very similar—achieving good health, both mental and physical, is at the core of all our actions and behaviors. I want to be a part of that journey in people’s lives—to help them on their track to achieving better health.

How I move medicine: Medicine is an ever-changing field, which means that those of us working to advance it, must move with it. This includes increasing access to health care to each and every individual—inherently meaning that medicine must go beyond the clinic. I stay educated on topics affecting our patients so I can be a better listener, and also work with fellow colleagues to enact change at the policy level—empowered by the stories my patients have shared with me.

Career highlights: I am most passionate about the variety of factors that are precipitating the opioid epidemic and other substance use disorders. I’ve worked to educate myself on substance use issues in my city by working with local communities and health care providers, and have advocated for better treatment options for all individuals either through policy writing or speaking with our legislators directly. It has been rewarding to see these issues that I care so much about being addressed on a larger public health scale.

Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: There’s so much I still have to learn, but what I have found is that when you find something that evokes feelings of anger, sadness, confusion, and above all hope—hold on to that. Because even during times when problems feel unsolvable, you’ll still be out there fighting, and you’ll be happy to do it. If that’s health care for you, then don’t give up—get involved.

How I give back to the community: I continue to learn from my peers and work with them to address public health issues—whether that’s increasing awareness of health care bills at my school, lobbying at my state or national legislative offices, or writing op-eds or collaborating on resolutions.

Aspect of my work that means the most: What I love the most about being a future clinician is the opportunity to build relationships and connect with my patients. There are complex problems affecting health care, and therefore the solutions must also be complex. Through my work with organized medicine, I've loved collaborating with my peers to think through and work on finding these solutions.

My hope for the future of medicine: I hope we as a society can treat all of our patients, regardless of their background or their disease, with the utmost respect and care. I also hope that we communicate more—with each other as health care providers, and with our patients. I hope we can be better listeners when our fellow clinicians are feeling stressed because of undue burden placed on them, and when our patients say that their biggest concerns are not their declining health, but figuring out how to get that help and treatment.

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