



Barbara A. Hummel, MD: Collaborating to protect the profession

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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: Barbara A. Hummel, MD, who is a family physician in Muskego, Wisconsin and a member of the governing council for the AMA Senior Physician Section.

AMA member since: 1984.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: I was very fortunate during my teen years to live with an aunt and uncle in Michigan. They awakened a thirst for knowledge in me and encouraged me to learn anything and everything that interested me. During that time, I was introduced to a rural family physician—someone who inspired me to question everything including science and medicine. He was my idol and along with my aunt and uncle he awakened my interest in science and medicine.

At that time, it was not easy for women to be accepted into medical school, but it built a fire in me that eventually allowed me to follow the path to becoming a physician. I was married and had four children when I decided it was time to go back to school and my good friend and primary care physician told me I had to go to medical school. After three years of undergraduate school I applied to the two medical schools in Wisconsin and was accepted at both.

How I move medicine: I work with students in high school, college and medical school, and encourage them to follow their heart. I talk with colleagues and encourage them to join together to protect our profession and our patients. As an individual physician we have no impact on the adverse influences facing our patients and our profession. Together we are stronger and can make a difference.

Aspect of my work that means the most to me: My interaction with patients is the most important thing I do. Knowing that I can make a difference in their life and health means a great deal to me and keeps me practicing long after I could have retired.

Career highlights: I served on the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians (WAFP) board of directors for six years. I was appointed to the Medical Society of Milwaukee County board of directors the year that I completed my term on the WAFP board of directors and advanced to secretary treasurer and eventually president. I was elected to the Wisconsin Medical Society (WMS) board of directors from my county and served as chair of District 1 delegation (five county delegation) to the WMS House of Delegates. I served as vice-chair of the WMS board of directors and then president of the society. I am an alternate delegate from the WMS to the AMA House of Delegates. I am proud to be one of the first members elected to the AMA Senior Physician Section governing council where I served as chair and as a representative to the task force developing guidelines for evaluating physician competence. I currently serve as secretary of the Private Practice Physician Congress. I am also a member of the board of directors for our Independent Physician Network of Southeast

Wisconsin and serve on the Quality Care Committee of our Accountable Care Organization.

Advice I would give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: Realize the changes that have occurred over the past decade in medicine with increasing employment of physicians by hospitals and understand that there is safety in numbers. Realize that as one doctor you have no power to protect your patients or your profession from corporate influence or government interference. It is important to know that we must work together to influence the future of medicine for us, our colleagues and our patients. The changes revolve around the corporate take-over of medicine and the fact that finances are placed above the welfare of our patients. Be prepared to fight to protect our patients' rights and health.

How I give back to my community: I serve as mentor to pre-medical students, medical students and residents, and I support our Independent Physician Network and Accountable Care Organization. I encourage the student involvement on the board of directors for our county and state organizations. I am currently offering to financially support our students' involvement in the AMA since our state no longer has the funds to do so. I attend the annual "Doctor's Day" at our state capital and interact with our legislators on that day and frequently when they want input from the medical community.

My hope for the future of medicine: We eventually get back to the point where physicians are in charge of medicine and there is no interference between the patient and the physician. There is nothing more sacred than that relationship and having an insurance company, hospital organization or government dictate what physicians are allowed to discuss or do for their patients is unacceptable. The constant change in drug formularies puts patients and senior citizens at risk and the high cost of medicine often impacts our senior citizens. My hope is that we figure out a way to bring the cost of medicine back to a reasonable level rather than allow the pharmaceutical companies to charge whatever they wish. Also, that we find a way to stop physician burnout by cutting all the interference from corporations and government.

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