

AMA history

Founding of the AMA

An 1845 resolution to the New York Medical Association by Dr. Nathan S. Davis, calling for a national medical convention, led to the establishment of the American Medical Association (AMA) in 1847. Scientific advancement, standards for medical education, launching a program of medical ethics, improved public health — these were the goals of the AMA.

Key historical dates

Since its founding in 1847 the AMA has played a crucial role in the development of medicine in the United States. Here's a look at some key historical dates:

- **1873:** AMA Judicial Council founded to deal with medical ethical and constitutional controversies.
- **1883:** Journal of the American Medical Association is first published; Nathan Davis is first editor.
- **1906:** AMA publishes first American Medical Directory listing over 128,000 licensed physicians in the U.S. and Canada.
- **1910:** The Flexner Report, *Medical Education in the United States and Canada*, funded by the Carnegie Foundation and supported by the AMA, is published and facilitates new standards for medical schools
- **1927:** AMA Council on Medical Education and Hospitals publishes first list of hospitals approved for residency training.
- **1943:** AMA opens an office in Washington, D.C
- **1950:** AMA Education and Research Foundation established to help medical schools meet expenses and to help medical students.
- **1966:** AMA publishes first edition of the Current Procedural Terminology (CPT), a system of standardized terms for medical procedures used to facilitate documentation.
- **1967:** The United States Adopted Names (USAN) Council is established to determine nonproprietary designations for chemical compounds.

- **1990:** AMA Fellowship Residency Electronic Interactive Data Access System (FREIDA) describing residency programs in the United States is available in electronic form.
- **2008:** Ronald M. Davis, MD, then the AMA's immediate past president, apologizes for more than a century of AMA policies that excluded African-Americans from the AMA and that also barred them from some state and local medical societies.

Key ways AMA has invested in patients

For more than 160 years the AMA has worked to create a healthier future for patients, including being at the forefront of advocating against racial and ethnic disparities in health care. Other notable ways the AMA has put patients first include:

- **1849:** AMA establishes a board to analyze quack remedies and nostrums and to enlighten the public in regard to the nature and danger of such remedies. The Department of Investigation (1913-1975) gathered and disseminated health fraud and quackery information for the public for over 60 years
- **1905:** AMA establishes a council to set standards for drug manufacturing and advertising
- **1923:** AMA promotes periodic examination of healthy persons
- **1961:** AMA recommends a nationwide vaccination using the Sabin oral vaccine against polio.
- **1972:** AMA launches war on smoking, urging the government to reduce and control the use of tobacco products and supporting legislation prohibiting the disbursement of tobacco samples.
- **1973:** AMA urges physicians to cooperate in a national program to combat hypertension.
- **1986:** AMA passes resolution opposing acts of discrimination against AIDS patients and any legislation that would lead to such categorical discrimination or that would affect patient-physician confidentiality.
- **1996:** AMA launches a crusade against health plan "gag clauses," resulting in these restrictive provisions being dropped by 5 leading managed care providers and laws prohibiting gag clauses in 16 states.
- **1997:** AMA launches the National Patient Safety Foundation to help ensure that all patients in all health care settings receive health care services safely.
- **2005:** AMA spearheads effort with 129 other health care and patient groups, which results in the passage and signing of the Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act.

AMA Historical Archives



Members of the American Medical Association have access to the AMA Archives as one of the many benefits of AMA membership. The Archives preserve documents, photographs, films, books, memorabilia and artifacts. Members have access to more than 90 historical collections for research, and pay no use fees and no fees to photocopy small numbers of archival materials.

The only AMA Archive collection that is open to collegiate and historical researchers from the public is the Historical Health Fraud and Alternative Medicine.

For more information about accessing the Historical Health Fraud and Alternative Medicine Collection please email the AMA Archives office at archives@ama-assn.org

AMA Digital Collection

A significant number of the AMA archives can also be found in the Digital Collection of Historical AMA Documents. This digital resource offers a comprehensive overview of AMA's history and activities, and provides a tool to trace past actions, policies, reports, speeches and more.

The records in the digital collections represent historical AMA positions, and may not reflect current policy.