

Col. Ronit Katz, MD: Born in Israel, dedicated to treating U.S. vets

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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: Col. Ronit Katz, MD, who is a preventive medicine, and occupational and environmental medicine physician at Stanford University Medical Center and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs’ War Related Illness and Injury Study Center in San Francisco. She is also the past chair of the AMA International Graduates Section (IMGS).

AMA member since: 2006.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: For me, medicine is a calling—it is a lifelong dedication, not a profession. I wanted to be a doctor since age 5, and there was no other profession that I would consider. My brother and mentor, Chaim Ben-Abraham, and my second mentor, Efraim Katzir, the fourth president of Israel, shaped my life and my choices in medicine, motivating me at each step of the way to continue to pursue my childhood dream and become a doctor.

How I move medicine: By giving back. I say, “Ask not what your AMA can do for you. Ask what you can do for your AMA and your patients.” I move medicine through advocacy and policy setting through the AMA and through local, regional and national organizations. I’ve served in a number of key roles for the AMA, which has allowed me to shape the medical field in this regard. These include:

- | AMA-IMGS Governing Council in 2012, chair, 2014–2015, immediate past chair, 2015.
- | Governing council member and chair of the AMA-IMGS Nominating and Leadership Development Committees, 2015–2016.
- | In 2017, I was re-elected to the AMA-IMGS Governing Council.
- | Currently serve on the Governing Council as delegate.

In these roles, I’ve contributed to an increasing membership in the IMG section, greater awareness of IMG issues, and enhanced visibility of the section overall. I continue to work on behalf of the IMG physicians and their patients to make progress to ensure licensing parity, avoid discrimination, increase GME slots for IMG, immigration issues, physician satisfaction, equality in examinations, streamline credentials verifications, and more.

Career highlights:

- | Attended Tel Aviv University at the age of 15.
- | Emigrated from Israel in 1982.
- | Received my medical degree magna cum laude.
- | Completed a fellowship in cancer research at Tufts-New England Medical Center.
- | Appointed a faculty member at Harvard University School of Public Health.
- | Board certified in preventive-occupational and environmental medicine.

Fellow of the American College of Preventive Medicine.

Received the Lawrence Livermore National Lab's certificate of excellence for outstanding performance in support of the Health Services Department and was elected president of the lab's women's association.

Selected as one of the "Top Doctors in Silicon Valley."

Given the "Excellent Teacher Award" by the Stanford University School of Medicine.

Received the AMA's "Excellence in Medicine and Leadership Award" in 2007, the "CA Achievement Medal" in 2012, the prestigious "NASA Group Achievement Award" in 2013, and the "California Commendation Medal" in 2017.

I have served on many boards and committees for local and national professional organizations. Among them: Bay Area Air Quality Management, and Urban Shield Homeland Security National & International Exercise.

Currently, I am a clinical associate professor at Stanford University Medical Center, where I treat patients and teach new doctors and medical students. I am a subject-matter expert for the VA War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (CA WRIISC), and director of post-deployment health services and clinics for the WRIISC.

Advice I'd give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: Follow your passion and calling. You work hard, but the rewards are enormous. Being able to save someone's life and for them to trust you with their life is the highest reward you can get. Pick a specialty that interests you—work hard and focus on the outcome. Making a difference and improving people's lives is what keeps me going and gives me joy.

How I give back to the community: In 2010, I received my commission as a lieutenant colonel when I volunteered to join the California State Military Reserve (CSMR), which assists Army and Air National Guard troops in a wide variety of roles.

The CSMR assumes emergency responsibilities, when called out by the governor, to assist the National Guard in their civil support missions. The CSMR also regularly trains National Guard soldiers in areas such as combat lifesaver skills, which includes basic casualty care, bleeding control, chest injury management, and in other diverse areas, such as small arms training and radio communications.

As a chief medical officer, I conduct physical exams, treat injuries and provide training and teaching to both the reservists and Guard members. I was promoted to a colonel in 2016 and currently provide medical support for the NASA/Moffett Field Air Rescue Wing in California.

Aspect of my work that means the most: Caring for my patients and making a difference in their lives. I also enjoy educating, coaching, and mentoring residents and medical students. I am passionate



about it because they will be the next generation of physician leaders. I love what I do because medicine is the perfect combination of helping, teaching, research and innovation.

Additionally, I'm a firm believer that "freedom is not free," and through my work at the VA I've seen how much help is needed for those who have served our country. They have served to guarantee our freedoms, and it is our responsibility as citizens to help them in return.