

Michael C. Lubrano, MD: Alleviating patients' pain, pre-op anxiety

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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: Michael C. Lubrano, MD, an anesthesiologist at Brigham & Women’s Hospital. He is also a delegate for the AMA Resident & Fellow Section (RFS) and a resident member of the AMA Council on Science and Public Health.

AMA member since: 2009.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: The intersection of biologic sciences and interpersonal human interaction is what initially inspired me to explore the field of medicine. Once I started volunteering at a local hospital near my undergraduate college, I was hooked.

I started in the outpatient chemotherapy infusion unit where I would provide snacks and company to cancer patients. There are few feelings in the world better than knowing that you’re improving the day of someone who has a serious illness—even if it’s through providing a sugar-sweetened beverage.

How I move medicine: I care deeply about every individual patient interaction I have on a daily basis, but also recognize that through continued local and national advocacy work that I can make a positive impact on the health of thousands to millions of people.

This is a really powerful motivator that keeps me going on late-night policy conference calls or early morning meetings at conferences. The nitty gritty of advocacy is not a particularly sexy endeavor, but when we accomplish major policy goals it can have a really positive impact on the health of the entire U.S. population.

Career highlights: As chair of the AMA RFS delegation, it was truly an honor to work with passionate stakeholders throughout the AMA to draft and adopt our resolution identifying that gun violence is a public health crisis. I had the privilege of speaking on the floor of the AMA House of Delegates representing residents and fellows nationally on this incredibly important item.

My time within the AMA has been riddled with experiences similar to this, where I’ve felt that I’ve been able to work with incredibly talented medical students and physicians on important topics that affect the lives of millions of patients on a daily basis.

Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: Recognize that none of us practice medicine in a bubble. If you are getting into medicine you should strongly consider incorporating a parallel “hidden curriculum” for yourself where you learn how to advocate for your patients and our profession as you train and practice. Medicine is hard work, but if you are passionate about this field it can be incredibly rewarding.

How I give back to the community: I have always tried to maintain involvement in my state medical and specialty societies as well as the AMA and my national specialty society. These are organizations with the infrastructure and resources to help physicians understand what legislative issues are being discussed that are impacting our communities as well as the political muscle to actually do something about them.

Aspect of my work that means the most: I am an anesthesiologist and a pain doctor. These specialties are somewhat related but also offer different, meaningful moments on any given day and I derive a significant amount of satisfaction by eliminating patient anxiety as well as pain.

For example, one of my favorite things about being an anesthesiologist is reassuring patients during those critical preoperative moments when they are deathly afraid of something horrible happening to them in the operating room. You can have an incredible impact in this setting and are often the only one with the time and skill to reduce anxiety here. Inversely, I will occasionally complete a pain procedure in clinic and have a patient's long-standing, chronic pain be immediately eliminated. This isn't possible for all patients or pain processes, but when it happens the elation that patients experience is really unparalleled.

My hope for the future of medicine: A refocus of time, energy and money on the therapeutic relationship between patients and their provider in the exam room rather than bureaucracy or party politics.

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