

Manna M. Varghese: Creating change is not a futile effort

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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: Manna M. Varghese, a fourth-year medical student at University of Missouri Kansas City School of Medicine.

AMA member since: 2014.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: The summer before my freshman year of high school, my grandfather was sick and in a hospital in India. My parents and I visited him during the last few weeks of his life, and seeing how the physicians there helped him recover and stay comfortable was inspiring. Unfortunately, a few weeks later, he passed away in part due to physician neglect, and in the days following, I vowed to myself that I would become a physician who would support patients in the hardest and most vulnerable times of their lives.

How I move medicine: Many medical students and physicians are interested in the politics surrounding health care and want to better the future of our profession, but they feel that their voice won't have an impact and that trying to bring change may be a futile effort. Through my involvement with the AMA, I have learned that this is far from the truth, and I am able to share my passion for—and the importance of—involvement in organized medicine with my colleagues, so we can better our profession together.

Career highlights: Acceptance into the six-year undergraduate and medical school program directly out of high school as an out-of-state student at my institution is extremely competitive and one of my most notable accomplishments.

Being elected at-large officer of the AMA Medical Student Section (MSS) last June was an incredible honor. The relationships that keep many students coming back to the AMA-MSS are formed in the regions. Serving as the liaison between the regions and the governing council is one of my favorite responsibilities.

Advice I'd give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: If you are 100% sure there is no other career you would be as happy and fulfilled in, this path is right for you. The days are long, and sometimes the years are long too, but it's worth it in the end when you are content in your career.

How I give back to the community: Advocacy is a vital part of a physician's practice—we cannot sit idly by while decisions are being made on ours and our patients' behalf by people completely outside the practice of medicine. My involvement in the AMA, both as a leader in the MSS and an alternate delegate to the AMA House of Delegates, allows me to advocate for physicians and patients. I also stay involved in advocacy on the state and local levels, through the respective medical societies.

Aspect of my work that means the most: Patients trust their physicians with the most intimate details of their lives and during the most vulnerable times of their lives. Being privy to such times in a person's life is an incredible honor that I don't take lightly.

My hope for the future of medicine: I hope, in the near future, we will live in a country where everyone has access to basic health care, including primary care services, without discrimination.

Medical education costs have increased drastically in the past 30 years, which puts aspiring physicians at a severe disadvantage when they start their careers. I hope this issue will change in the upcoming years.

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