

Women in medicine are trailblazers, advocates and leaders

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Each September, the AMA is proud to recognize and honor the immense contributions women make to the House of Medicine. Such recognition is particularly appropriate this year. I count myself lucky to be joined by two exceptional women physicians in holding the offices of president, president-elect, and immediate past president, which is a first in the AMA's 172-year history. This is an important milestone not only for the AMA, but for organized medicine.

Women physicians confront professional challenges that their male counterparts don't face, from gender-based pay inequity to routinely being mistaken for nonphysician staff members. The AMA's own studies show that women physicians are still shouldering a greater share of child-rearing and other responsibilities at home, contributing to greater difficulty in maintaining a healthy work-life integration.

Despite these and other challenges, women continue to excel at every level of medicine. We continue to lead the way in forging new opportunities for female medical students, residents and physicians in a profession where men historically made up most of the workforce.

How the workforce is evolving

Clearly, that is changing. Women now make up 34.7% of the U.S. physician workforce, compared to just 5% as recently as 1970. More women than men are entering medical school, and already half of all U.S. medical school students—and graduates—are women. These physicians are well-trained for the careers ahead of them, having learned from more female faculty members than at any time in our history.

Similarly, the role women play within the AMA has never been greater. Women now represent more than one-third of AMA membership, exceeding the percentage of the nation's female physicians. The AMA Women Physicians Section (AMA-WPS) represents nearly 90,000 AMA members and continues to grow. The AMA-WPS is involved in a wide range of policymaking activities and advocacy initiatives

to increase the influence of women in leadership roles, and to advance women's health.

Additionally, one-third of the representatives on the 2019–2020 AMA Board of Trustees are women. Women are involved in all AMA councils, and account for an increasing share of our House of Delegates, which helps advise and shape policy for physicians nationwide.

Funding critical research

Again this year, the AMA is honoring influential women physician leaders through the Joan F. Giambalvo Fund for the Advancement of Women research grant program. The scholarship awards up to \$10,000 to health care researchers to identify and address issues that affect women physicians and medical students. The AMA has granted 25 research awards since 2006 on topics such as flexible work options, gender differences in the practice patterns of obstetrician-gynecologists, the attrition of women during medical training, and gender bias in medical student evaluations.

The AMA is committed to advancing the role women play across all aspects of modern medicine, and we are working to achieve this goal in multiple ways. We continue to monitor trends while identifying and addressing emerging professional issues that affect women in medicine.

And we always strive to partner with outside organizations that share similar concerns, such as the American Medical Women's Association. The AMA is helping educate health care leaders on common barriers women physicians face, and we're supporting their career development by advancing strategies for overcoming these obstacles.

Women in medicine take on multiple roles, often simultaneously. They are trailblazers who find innovative solutions to longstanding problems, and create new opportunities for female medical students and physicians where none existed before. They are advocates who stand up for their patients, and champion health care policies and laws that protect women and families.

Most importantly, women in medicine are leaders who bring to health care their personal experiences and perspectives, who mentor female colleagues, and who serve as role models for female students and young girls, all while promoting better health outcomes for all.

The AMA is proud to stand with women in medicine each September and throughout the year as we work collectively to improve medicine and the health of the nation.

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