What real innovation in medicine looks like

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Andis Robeznieks
Senior News Writer

Innovators in health care are finding new ways to improve patient diagnosis, outcomes and experience while reducing physician burnout, lowering costs and developing new payment models to reward value rather than volume. Six AMA members were recently recognized for their efforts in these areas.

Richard Milani, MD, chief clinical transformation officer for New Orleans-based AMA group member Ochsner Health System, has demonstrated the power of innovation by using augmented intelligence (AI) to predict whether a patient’s condition will deteriorate, promoting mobile telephone apps to spark “patient activation” in their own health, and showing that letting patients sleep results in shorter hospital stays.

Dr. Milani, along with five other AMA members, landed on the inaugural roster of trade publication Modern Healthcare’s top health care innovators. The list recognizes individuals who “found new ways to engage consumers, improve quality of care and lower costs.”

The magazine described Dr. Milani’s use of smartphones to engage patients in managing their chronic conditions. It cited a study finding that 71% of Ochsner patients using smartphone apps got their hypertension under control, compared with only 31% of patients receiving regular care.

Last year, Ochsner and its IT partner earned a Microsoft Health Innovation Award for using more than 1 billion clinical data points to create a network capable of predicting patient deterioration outside of the intensive-care unit with close to 90% accuracy. Rapid response teams swing into action if a patient’s risk level hits a certain threshold.

Kimberlydawn Wisdom, MD, senior vice president of community health and equity and chief wellness and diversity officer for Henry Ford Health System, a Detroit-based AMA group member, was recognized for her work to reduce African-American infant mortality.
The former Michigan surgeon general launched the Women-Inspired Neighborhood Network, or WIN, that used midwives, social workers and patient-advocate community health workers to help women reach their due date, to have their babies born with normal birth weights, and to initiate breastfeeding.

The program launched in 2008 and there have been zero preventable infant deaths among women participating in the program.

“The community health worker is the secret sauce,” Dr. Wisdom told Detroit publication Model D. “She goes to the women’s homes, becomes their mentor, best friend, biggest supporter. It’s pretty amazing.”

The AMA Health System Engagement Program offers large physician groups resources that improve efficiency and increase support for their doctors. Partners receive customized help in reducing burnout, seats at the table in advocacy discussions, and much more.

The Modern Healthcare list also praises Bechara Choucair, MD, Kaiser Permanente’s vice president and chief community health officer, for leading the integrated health system’s $200 million affordable housing effort.

Dr. Choucair, a former Chicago public health commissioner, was also cited for overseeing Kaiser’s efforts to address social determinants of health and gun violence-prevention research.

Stephen Lawless, MD, senior vice president and chief clinical officer for Nemours Children’s Health System, was recognized for creating his system’s Clinical Logistics Center, which borrows concepts from air-traffic control command centers. Specially trained paramedics and nurses monitor patients remotely as data pulled from the patient’s electronic health record is displayed on a dashboard.

Since the center was launched in 2012, there have been no unexpected deaths in patients being monitored for sepsis and a 35% improvement in the sepsis response-time rate has been recorded, Modern Healthcare reports.

Lincoln Nadauld, MD, PhD, executive director of Intermountain Healthcare Precision Genomics, was recognized for the Salt Lake City system’s “breakthrough development” of creating personalized treatments by decoding the genetic makeup of their patients’ cancer cells.

The magazine also cited Dr. Nadauld for launching HerediGene: Population Study, a project that will analyze the DNA of 500,000 people and focus on discovering new connections between genetics and disease.

“The research is expected to have a global impact as medications, treatments, and healthcare
innovations that can benefit patients universally are developed from the findings,” Dr. Nadauld has said.

Jen Brull, MD, is the medical director of a Kansas accountable care organization (ACO) operated by Aledade, a Bethesda, Maryland-based company that partners with primary care physicians to build ACOs.

The magazine credits Dr. Brull with implementing a “Roadmap to Awesomeness” which has helped the ACO identify gaps in care, reduce hospital admissions for congestive heart failure patients by 23%, and reduce Medicare patient emergency department visits by 11% in 2017.

Read more about the other health care innovators highlighted by Modern Healthcare.