Shawn C. Jones, MD: From burnout to finding meaning in work again

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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: Shawn C. Jones, MD, an otolaryngologist at Baptist Health Kentucky in Paducah, Kentucky. He is an alternate delegate to the AMA House of Delegates (HOD) representing the Kentucky Medical Association (KMA). Dr. Jones is also in the HOD Otolaryngology Section Council and the Obesity Caucus.

AMA member since: 1983.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: I do not ever remember making the decision to practice medicine. In some way, I just always knew from a very early age that I wanted to be a physician. There were not any doctors in my family, but there were a number of doctors in my hometown who helped me affirm that desire, which had existed in nascent form in elementary school and high school.

How I move medicine: Organized medicine at every level provides a tremendous opportunity to leverage advocacy for public health initiatives that help to move medicine. I have been engaged in multiple education and advocacy efforts involving smoke-free laws, electronic cigarette and vaping devices, the pursuit of healthy lifestyles, the opioid crisis, physician well-being, funding of pediatric cancer research, as well as suicide prevention.

Career highlights: I have been president of the KMA and currently serve as president of the Kentucky Foundation for Medical Care, which is the charitable arm of the KMA. I received the KMA Distinguished Service Award in 2016 and was recently named the 2019 Alumni Fellow for the University of Louisville School of Medicine. A book I have written about my experience with physician burnout is an Amazon bestseller.

Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: I would encourage those considering a career in medicine to relentlessly pursue their passion. It is also important to look for opportunities to be mentored by those whom you admire and, similarly, be willing to mentor others along the way.

How I give back to the community: I have been appointed to serve on our local county board of health as well as the Purchase District Board of Health in Western Kentucky. Additionally, I am a member of the Physician Wellness Committee for Baptist Health Medical Group. I am on the gratis faculty of the otolaryngology department at the University of Louisville, traveling to Kenya on mission trips twice with the department. I have also served on mission trips with other organizations, in Honduras multiple times and in Romania once.

Aspect of my work that means the most: It is the everyday interactions with patients and their
families that provides me the most meaning in my work.

My hope for the future of medicine: The patient-physician relationship is sacrosanct, and my desire is that it remains at the compassionate core of medicine. My hope for the future of medicine is an increasing awareness of and emphasis on the prevention of disease and the promotion of wellness through lifestyle modification.

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