

Effort aims to create cadre of physician LGBTQ health specialists

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What's the news: The AMA Foundation has recruited a powerhouse philanthropist to lead its efforts to address LGBTQ health disparities through a national fellowship program that will create a cadre of physician specialists targeting the issue.

John D. Evans, a telecommunications pioneer who co-founded the C-SPAN cable channel, will lead the AMA Foundation Fellowship Commission for LGBTQ Health. For more than a decade, Evans served on the board of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative. He also served on the University of Michigan's Global Health Initiative Advisory Board and now co-chairs the advisory board for the Institute of Human Virology at the University of Maryland. That institute was co-founded by Robert Gallo, MD, who discovered HIV.

Evans will serve as chair of the AMA Foundation's commission, which will consist of about another dozen thought leaders, educational specialists, doctors and philanthropists to be appointed by the AMA Foundation's board of directors. Learn more about the AMA Foundation LGBTQ Fellowship Program.

Why it matters to patients and physicians: Establishing a national network of LGBTQ health specialist physicians who are formally trained to serve sexual and gender minorities will have a dramatic and positive impact on this patient population.

"A key social determinant of health affecting sexual and gender minorities is a shortage of health care providers who are knowledgeable and culturally competent in LGBTQ health," said Joshua M. Cohen, MD, MPH, former president of the AMA Foundation and founding donor of its LGBTQ endowment fund.

"Policies that permit the denial of services to LGBTQ people are linked to a 46% increase in the proportion of gay, lesbian, and bisexual adults who report mental distress and gay men account for

more than two thirds of all people diagnosed with HIV each year in the United States, despite comprising only 2% of the general population.”

Read more from the AMA on how to avoid the insensitive care that LGBTQ patients often fear.

What's next: The LGBTQ fellowship cohort provides a transformative opportunity to cut LGBTQ health disparities, increase cultural and clinical competence among physicians in LGBTQ health, better identify and address this patient population's unique health needs and improve the quality of life, health and well-being of LGBTQ communities.

The AMA Foundation LGBTQ fellows also will improve understanding of, and action on, social determinants of health faced by members of this community by promoting and disseminating medical research.

“It is critical we eliminate health care disparities facing the LGBTQ community,” Evans said.

“Intersectional issues of discrimination, stigma, access to and quality of care are experienced at a higher rate by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals, and we believe this new initiative will improve the health of LGBTQ people across the country.

“We will create a pipeline of LGBTQ health specialists who are able to serve the health care needs of the LGBTQ community while growing the pool of competent instructors able to pay it forward by passing on their knowledge to the next generation of LGBTQ providers,” he added.

The AMA is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment for the LGBTQ community and ensuring they get the care they need. Get the latest LGBTQ health care news and policy coverage from the AMA.