Generosity of AMA employees shines during COVID-19 and beyond

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Service to others lies at the core of organized medicine. The men and women who become physicians endure the challenges of medical education and training because they are driven to serve others. That profound commitment is critically important in times like these, when caring for victims of a potentially fatal virus poses a widespread risk to everyone involved.

AMA employees, meanwhile, are remarkably committed to supporting physicians and our communities through our mission-based work. Our organization and its philanthropic arm, the AMA Foundation, have a long history of pitching in to help others in times of crisis. I am both pleased and proud to report that the people of the AMA are enhancing this legacy through their volunteerism, financial assistance, donations of equipment and expertise, and other contributions to overcome the challenges posed to our nation by COVID-19.

You may be aware of some of the many webinars and podcasts, virtual town hall meetings, resource guides, and research papers published in JAMA that we have undertaken in response to the pandemic. But what you may not know is that the 1,200-plus people who work at the AMA have been pitching in to ease the impact of the crisis through a broad range of initiatives.

These include:

- Cash donations totaling more than $15,700 to the Greater Chicago Food Depository and the Capital Area Food Bank (which serves the Washington, D.C. area). This amount was boosted by a $10,000 matching donation from the AMA’s Enterprise Social Responsibility program.
- AMA employees have made and donated nearly 800 facemasks for health care professionals and first responders, and logged 500 hours of volunteer service to a broad range of community organizations as of May 1. Both of these efforts are ongoing.
In cooperation with The Langham, Chicago, our neighbor at AMA Plaza, we donated 7,500 facemasks to West Side United in Chicago, and another 2,500 masks to DMC Harper University Hospital in Detroit.

The AMA is matching contributions up to $10,000 each to the Erie Neighborhood House Community Relief Fund to help its clients manage rent, utility and other costs; and to West Side United to purchase masks produced by Novias Davila, a family-owned dressmaking shop in Chicago’s Little Village neighborhood that switched from making bridal gowns and quinceañera dresses in favor of facemasks in March.

Dozens of AMA employees have placed more than 800 phone calls to check on the well-being of elderly and isolated individuals in cooperation with the Chicago Department of Aging and the Junior League Club of Chicago.

Meanwhile, the AMA Foundation has given each of the 11 community health organizations it serves the authority to reallocate grant funding originally intended to prevent and treat type-II diabetes and hypertension, and use this money instead to fight COVID-19.

This action has freed up about $250,000 for organizations stretching from New York City to San Diego to address specific needs in their communities related to the pandemic. The AMA Foundation also arranged delivery of 6,000 pieces of personal protective equipment to three of these community health clinics, each of which had an unmet and dire need.

All of these actions, and others not described here, point to the desire of everyone within the AMA to advance our mission to improve the health of our nation and drive organized medicine—and our communities—toward a more equitable future. The AMA is the physician’s powerful ally in patient care, and we draw that power from the strength and dedication of talented and skilled individuals at every level of our organization.