

Otolaryngologist honored for dedication to Atlanta's uninsured

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The efforts of AMA member Charles E. Moore, MD, began with a focus on head-and-neck cancer awareness, then eventually sprawled into the creation of the HEALing Community Center, a federally qualified community health care center to address the needs of uninsured patients living in poverty in the Atlanta area.



Charles E. Moore, MD

Citing his dedication to providing accessible and equitable medical services and health education to the people of Atlanta, the AMA honored Dr. Moore, a Georgia-based otolaryngologist, with the Benjamin Rush Award for Citizenship and Community Service at the November 2020 AMA Special Meeting.

“It is an honor to present Dr. Moore with this AMA award honoring his dedication to helping those in greatest need of care and confronting the underlying reasons that create health disparities,” said AMA President Susan R. Bailey, MD. “His pursuit of health equity has strived for the highest possible standard of health for all people and given special attention to the needs of those at greatest risk of poor health. He is an inspiration to all physicians and his commitment to the betterment of public health sets a high bar to which we should all strive to attain.”

Pioneer in video-assisted surgery

From humble beginnings, born in a small rural town in Iran, Camran R. Nezhat, MD, rose through the physician ranks to become a pioneer in reproductive and laparoscopic surgery. The California-based physician was recognized by the AMA with its Distinguished Service Award.



Camran R. Nezhat, MD

Dr. Nezhat (pictured) was chosen by the AMA as an exceptional innovator and trailblazer whose significant contributions have revolutionized modern day surgery. He is best known for inventing video-assisted endoscopy and was the first to perform groundbreaking advances in minimally-invasive surgical procedures that have helped millions of patients around the globe.

“Innovation is a key driver in transforming health care and Dr. Nezhat pioneering work has

fundamentally changed contemporary surgery and opened a path for surgeons around the world to help their patients”, Dr. Bailey said. “He continues to push the leading-edge of advanced procedures and the development of the safest, most efficacious technologies to enhance patient care and improve outcomes.”

Trailblazer in women's health

Vivian W. Pinn, MD, a groundbreaking academic and public health official, also received the Distinguished Service Award.

A former president of the National Medical Association, the nation's oldest and largest organization representing Black physicians and health professionals, Dr. Pinn, an AMA member, has been a leader in women's health for decades. She was appointed as first director of the new Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) at the National Institutes for Health and first permanent NIH associate director of research on women's health.

In her 20 years in that position, she helped raise awareness of women's health issues and underrepresentation in science and medicine worldwide, across educational, political and cultural communities.

Addiction medicine educator

Also during the opening session of the Special Meeting, the AMA Foundation honored Alena A. Balasanova, MD, with its Health Education Award. At the University of Nebraska, Dr. Balasanova has developed and implemented an addiction and psychiatric clinical service and also wrote the curriculum for clinical rotations for medical students, residents and fellows in addiction medicine.

She also created resolutions destigmatizing addiction language that were adopted by the Nebraska Medical Association and presented and adopted at the 2019 AMA Interim Meeting.

Dr. Balasanova's family immigrated to the United States from Armenia as refugees. Her past experiences have inspired Dr. Balasanova to be a passionate voice for the voiceless, exemplified by her work in Nebraska and in organized medicine nationally.

“I would like to thank my parents, who sacrificed everything to bring their 7-year old daughter to the United States for political asylum—where she could have the freedoms they never had; where she could be free to pursue, and achieve, the American dream. I am privileged to be that girl, and to pay it forward to the next generation.”

The Health Education Award is made possible through the generous support of the John P. McGovern Foundation.

Honors for organized medicine work

In addition to the aforementioned physicians, a handful of contributors to organized medicine were honored by the AMA for their service to the practice of medicine during the Special Meeting.

Douglas E. Henley, MD, former executive vice president and chief executive officer of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP). A winner of the Medical Executive Lifetime Achievement Award, Dr. Henley (pictured) began his medical association career at the AAFP in 2000. He focused his efforts on measuring the impact of health care reform and developing alternate payment methods.



Douglas E. Henley, MD

Dr. Henley, an AMA member, has been a strong advocate for the nation’s most vulnerable populations and for diversity in the physician workforce. He played a crucial role in AAFP’s passage of health equity and diversity policy, calling on all family physicians to dismantle institutional racism.

Mark Andrejeski, the recently retired executive vice president of the American College of Rheumatology (ACR).

Honored with the Medical Executive Lifetime Achievement Award, Andrejeski guided the ACR in its renaming to the American College of Rheumatology after being known as the American Rheumatism Association since 1937.

In the late '90s, he introduced advocacy efforts to ensure fair payment for rheumatologists when the Food and Drug Administration approved biologic therapies. Under his leadership, the ACR has donated more than \$22.5 million

Susan G. D'Antoni, CEO of the Montgomery County Medical Society (MCMS) and the National Capital Physicians Foundation. Honored with the with the Medical Executive Meritorious Achievement Award, D'Antoni's achievements as chief executive of MCMS include the development of Maryland's first early intervention counseling program to combat physician burnout, successful implementation of membership retention strategies, and cultivation of key contacts at both the grassroots and national levels for advocacy purposes.

Penny S. Mills, former executive vice president and CEO of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM). Another contributor to care honored with the Medical Executive Lifetime Achievement Award, Mills helped give the field of addiction medicine a political voice by strengthening its advocacy and coalition-building efforts on Capitol Hill and with state legislators.

During this time, ASAM grew its membership 155% as it expanded its educational training and resources for physicians to treat addiction. Mills has sent strong staff and member support to expand ASAM's AMA delegation and to work together on legislation to eliminate barriers to medication for treatment of opioid-use disorders.

Catherine M. Rydell, CEO of the American Academy of Neurology (AAN). Bestowed the Medical Executive Lifetime Achievement Award, Rydell helped launch the AAN's Sports Concussion Conference, supported the creation of free brain-health fairs, and reaffirmed the organization's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

In addition to her role with AAN, Rydell also serves on the American Brain Foundation's board of directors and as a member of the Specialty Society CEO Coalition.

Philip A. Schuh, executive vice president and chief financial officer of the Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY). A tireless guide for New York doctors through the rapidly changing medical practice environment, Schuh's contributions earned him the Medical Executive Lifetime Achievement Award. In addition to his role at MSSNY, Schuh has been an active participant in the Physicians Advocacy Foundation and serves on the board of directors of the Physicians Foundation for Excellence

Robert W. Seligson, executive vice president and CEO of the North Carolina Medical Society (NCMS). Seligson's contributions as chief executive of NCMS earned him the Medical Executive

Lifetime Achievement Award. Seligson—known as “Bob”—has been credited with modernizing and streamlining the organization’s governance and helmed major victories in medical liability reform and Medicaid managed care.

Seligson also continues to address major public health issues through his leadership, such as the opioid epidemic and social determinants of health. In addition to his role at NCMS, he serves as a member of the AMA’s Team-Based Care Task Force and is the past president of the American Association of Medical Society Executives.

Tenna Wiles, CEO of the Palm Beach County Medical Society. Wiles has partnered with physician volunteers to develop and implement seven different programs spanning needs such as care coordination, preventative care, physician leadership development and addressing physician burnout.

Many of these programs were established thanks to the development of Palm Beach County Medical Society Services, a sister organization that allows local community members to actively engage with physician leaders. Those efforts earned her AMA recognition in the form of the Medical Executive Lifetime Achievement Award.