Placing physicians at the front line of health care innovation

James L. Madara, MD, AMA CEO, discusses the importance of the physician perspective to developing effective and manageable health care innovations.

The American Medical Association knows physicians. We know what frustrates them, what inspires them, and how the system is failing them, their patients and the profession. Our insight into the physician mind is built on 170 years of industry-leading research and on collaboration with 186 state and specialty medical societies represented through AMA’s health policy-making House of Delegates.

Because we understand physicians better than anyone, we recognize the importance of the physician voice in this time of rapid change in medicine. Their perspective is essential in the crafting of new polices that affect the clinical working environment and patient care, just as it’s vital in the design and development of new digital tools that promise to improve how care is delivered around the world.

The digital revolution must meet physician & patient needs

This question about how physicians are shaping the digital revolution under way in medicine was a key theme for the 43,000 who attended the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) 18 and was underscored in the keynote address by Eric Schmidt, chairman of Google’s parent company Alphabet. Referencing the AMA’s landmark research with Dartmouth that showed physicians spend about two hours on their keyboards and other administrative tasks for every one hour spent with patients, Schmidt called on the health care industry to move more quickly and nimbly to meet the evolving needs of patients and physicians.

What AMA is doing to advance innovation

The AMA is responding to that challenge in ways you might expect—by initiating partnerships in and outside of the sector, through a focused research agenda and federal and state advocacy – and in ways you might not. We’re placing physicians at the center of innovative discovery, pairing physicians and tech entrepreneurs at innovation labs in Silicon Valley and Chicago, online through our Physician Innovation Network, and through a series of groundbreaking initiatives, such as the new AMA
Integrated Health Model Initiative, which supports greater health data liquidity, information sharing and interoperability across systems. Harnessing these technologies, we also seek ways to expand the reach of physician expertise to underserved populations, and develop standards that will improve the quality, safety and effectiveness of mobile health applications.

The AMA has served as the leading ally for the profession for 170 years and our legacy is a commitment to ethics and evidence. Today, our ambition is to ensure that new digital tools are evidence-based, clinically relevant and patient-focused. In other words, we’re ensuring that digital innovations not only meet the high standards of clinical care but also improve patient outcomes.

What these and other AMA digital initiatives get right is that they flip the standard model for development by putting physicians at the starting line. This work is as much about the future of health care delivery as it is about the momentum we are building today, and how we come together in this moment to shape medicine for generations to come.

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