While the public’s trust in many institutions has waned during the COVID-19 pandemic, people still trust their doctors—and doctors trust the AMA.

AMA Executive Vice President and CEO James L. Madara, MD, provided proof of this trust in an address during the opening session of the November 2021 AMA Special Meeting, and he explained that the AMA had earned that trust by being physicians’ powerful ally in patient care.

“Trust in physicians was shown to be high among all groups, demographics and political affiliations,” Dr. Madara told the AMA House of Delegates. “Physicians trust us to give voice to their concerns, and to help mitigate the challenges they face—from PPE shortages, to financial stress, to increasing regulatory burdens.”

The AMA has been lauded by outside parties for the Association’s influence on health policy and for “being stewards of industry reputation,” Dr. Madara noted.

Physician trust in AMA on the rise

Inside the profession, there is growing proof of physicians' trust in the AMA.

This includes membership growth of more than one-third in the last decade, a record-breaking 26 million unique visitors to the AMA website, more than 1 million views of the “AMA Moving Medicine” and “AMA COVID-19 Update” video shows posted each weekday, and a fivefold rise in daily listens to
AMA podcasts.

The AMA's focus on removing obstacles to patient care, driving the future of medicine through advances in education, and leading the charge to prevent chronic disease is amplified by a commitment to physician advocacy, health equity and innovation. All of this links back to the AMA mission statement: To promote the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health.

“The AMA exists to benefit the public, but we do so in a very particular way—by being the physicians' powerful ally in patient care. We serve the public by serving those who care for the public,” Dr. Madara said. “Supporting physicians and improving our nation's health has been our focus since 1847.”

The AMA is putting these words into action by collaborating with leading local health systems and investing $2 million in the efforts of the community organization West Side United, which is working to lower the life-expectancy gap between people living in Chicago's West Side neighborhoods and the city’s more affluent areas.

“As one piece of our equity work, we partner with many on the West Side—including community groups and providers—to deal with the No. 1 risk factor for death and disability—high blood pressure,” Dr. Madara said. “Through this work, we hope to define pathways for improved health outcomes that might be applied to similar neighborhoods nationally that have been economically and socially marginalized.”

This effort requires an understanding of local health needs and an empathic approach delivered with humility, he said.

**Physician-driven digital innovations**

Connected to these undertakings is the development of training modules to make it easier to adopt telehealth and other digital medicine tools. Dr. Madara described how developments at Health2047, the Silicon Valley-based innovation subsidiary of the AMA, will help transform U.S. health care at the system level.

Health2047 has had two spinoff companies in 2021. One is Emergence Healthcare Group, a company providing a bundled turnkey solution allowing practices to offload paperwork and administrative burdens so physicians can spend more time with patients. Another is Sitebridge Research, a company creating a “trial-in-a-box” platform that will make it easier for smaller practices to participate in clinical trials.
What makes Health2047 spinoffs different from other Silicon Valley endeavors is that the tools they create spring directly from the patient-physician encounter and a desire to solve problems at the ground level. That’s a stark contrast to what’s too often been the norm: developing costly high-tech gadgets that are administratively imposed on physicians from the top down.

“That latter approach is often taken in nonphysician-led organizations, resulting in the hodgepodge of solutions thrown over the transom into our practices,” Dr. Madara said.

“The AMA is committed to creating a health system that’s accessible, efficient, and equitable,” he added. “To get there, we need an environment that supports physicians—one that allows doctors to be doctors rather than scribes and box checkers.”