

Dig deep on health care issues that matter with 10 top Q&As

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In a year that started with the promise of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines and is ending with concerns about the rise of yet another SARS-CoV-2 variant that could exacerbate the pandemic of the unvaccinated, physicians' mettle has been tested like never before.

Many of the doctors who are fighting COVID-19, promoting vaccination, advancing health equity, working to end the drug-overdose epidemic, and battling burnout have taken time from their busy schedules this year to explore how they are moving medicine forward in exclusive, in-depth Q&A-format interviews with the AMA.

Below, find our Q&As with 10 of these physicians.

1

New AMA president goes on offense against COVID-19

In June, Gerald E. Harmon, MD, became the 176th person to hold the office of AMA president, one of medicine's most impactful posts. Dr. Harmon discusses how his 35-year military career has helped him in assessing the road ahead as the AMA's new president and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2

This Black doctor fights COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy

It will take everyone, from physicians, families and friends to churches, to fight the battle against COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy. Learn about the efforts of Marcus Christopher Griffith, MD, who speaks with patients from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups—such as Black, Hispanic and Native American populations—about protective

value of COVID-19 vaccination.

3 Training the doctors who will fight nation's drug-overdose epidemic

It's hard to believe that addiction psychiatrist Alëna A. Balasanova, MD, is just getting started. For her work developing and implementing an addiction and psychiatric clinical service at the University of Nebraska Medical Center—just one year after completing her residency training—and for writing the curriculum for clinical rotations for medical students, residents and fellows in addiction psychiatry, Dr. Balasanova was honored last year with the AMA Foundation Award for Health Education.

The worsening drug-overdose epidemic underscores why the painstaking efforts of physicians such as Dr. Balasanova are all the more critical.

4 Why future doctors must learn Holocaust's awful lessons

The Nazis' efforts to eliminate anyone who didn't fit into their vision of racial purity were enabled by medical professionals and medical programs in Germany—and, long before, in the U.S. AMA member Matthew K. Wynia, MD, MPH, professor of medicine and public health and director of the Center for Bioethics and Humanities at the University of Colorado in Aurora, explores why the medical profession's role in the Holocaust is essential learning for medical students.

5 This Mississippi physician gives TV viewers a trusted voice on COVID-19

Rambod A. Rouhbakhsh, MD, principal investigator for Hattiesburg Clinic MediSync Clinical Research and associate program director at the Forrest General Hospital Family Medicine Residency Program, diagnosed the very first COVID-19 case in Mississippi on March 11, 2020. Now he's a familiar face and calm voice being broadcast into Hattiesburg-area living rooms regularly on local station WDAM-TV's news broadcast. Dr. Rouhbakhsh answers viewers' questions about COVID-19 and keeps the public well informed about all things pandemic.

6 Clearing up confusion on physician burnout and depression

It is important to differentiate between physician burnout and depression. While burnout has often been misconstrued to be directly related to depression and suicidal ideation, that is not the case. AMA Vice President of Professional Satisfaction Christine Sinsky, MD, cleared up some of the muddle surrounding burnout, depression and suicide while detailing how to better help physicians overcome the COVID-19 pandemic's powerful stressors.

7

Calling out systemic racism's impact in medicine

Whether it's posting a viral tweet on a landmark change in AMA policy or creating a podcast about public health issues in people of color, Faith Crittenden, MD, MPH, wants to advance the conversation on health policy and systemic racism. Dr. Crittenden discusses her role in crafting AMA policy to recognize racism as a public health threat and the urgent need to increase diversity in medicine.

8

How IMGs overcome big barriers to practice medicine in U.S.

Twelve years ago, Kamalika Roy, MD, made the journey from India to continue her medical training in the U.S. as an international medical graduate (IMG). She has since completed residency and fellowship training, her master's in clinical research, and continued as a faculty in the psychiatry department.

Dr. Roy—an assistant professor of psychiatry at Oregon Health & Science University—chairs the AMA International Medical Graduate Section and offered insights on some of the challenges faced by those who trained internationally aiming to practice in the United States.

9

Pushing the door open for women in medicine to advance

Long before COVID-19 struck, AMA member Alexa B. Kimball, MD—a dermatologist, CEO and president of Harvard Medical Faculty Physicians at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center—worked to create a solid foundation for the organizations that she runs.

She set the vision for these organizations and for those in management positions, making it possible to survive, and thrive, during the pandemic. Her leadership and insight have broken barriers for women in medicine, but her work is far from over.

10**She was hired to boost doctors' well-being—then COVID-19 hit**

Starting a new job is never easy, let alone during a global pandemic. For Amy Frieman, MD, a palliative care physician, that was a reality. Dr. Frieman started her role as chief wellness officer at Hackensack Meridian Health in Edison, New Jersey, in January 2020. Learn how she shifted focus when COVID-19 hit hard and never missed a beat.

Physicians can be healers, caregivers, scientists, advocates, change-makers and decision-makers. Read more of the AMA's exclusive Q&As with some of the nation's outstanding doctors.