Work life at the AMA: Employee spotlight

Get to know the interesting and diverse individuals whose dedication, commitment, hard work and energy keep the AMA running. Read about their experiences, get a sense of our culture and get a glimpse of your potential future colleagues, the diverse individuals that make up our AMA.

July 2022 feature

Seth Blumenthal—IHMI Director of Clinical Review

Q: What is a project your team is currently working on that you are excited about?

A: My favorite thing about being an AMA employee is the opportunity to understand national issues, be a part of the prioritization process and put significant energy toward their resolution. And our AMA gives us the tools and resources to attack problems doggedly over time. Even if we are not able to
fully resolve, we can often make an impact that at organizations with shorter-term horizons would not be possible.

I have learned how to be a part of this process in general and like applying it to issues that sit at the intersection of technology, policy and clinical. At IHMI, we are trying to improve the interoperability of health data in the United States. We do this by contributing to standards efforts and also by developing proof of concept software applications that attempt to show the business value of improved interoperability.

My role in this process is tackling areas of opportunity, taking ideas for solutions and trying to turn them into viable projects. These projects could involve building and pilot testing a software application and then looking for ways to commercialize it. Our work serves as an internal pipeline for innovation and successful projects can then become new products through the AMA, our AMA Innovations subsidiary or even find new life through Health 2047.

Q: Who has had the most influence in your life and approach to work?

A: I've had many mentors over the years who taught me how to develop good systems for working productively, and especially how to learn the culture at different styles of organizations and how to fit in—and then to use influence to try and change things for the better. Classes in behavioral economics at the University of Chicago made an impact. I've had people from all walks of life teach me (sometimes indirectly) how to be a better person.

Q: What is one of the most important life lessons you have learned?

A: The importance of third places. Our home is the first place and work is the second. The third places are those places we gather in, such as restaurants, bars, cafes, community centers, places of learning and support, that are neither home nor our workplaces. Many essential functions of humanity occur better when we have access to third places. Outside of work, I have dedicated my life to supporting and even building third places here in the city.

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