Orthopaedic surgeons honor Dr. Gurman for a lifetime of leadership

APR 11, 2022

Kevin B. O'Reilly
News Editor

What’s the news: Orthopaedic hand surgeon Andrew W. Gurman, MD, who served as AMA president during the fierce 2017 battle over proposals to dramatically overhaul the Affordable Care Act, has been honored for his leadership qualities by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS).
Andrew W. Gurman, MD

The AAOS presented its 2022 William W. Tipton Jr., MD, Leadership Award to Dr. Gurman, who was the AMA’s 171st president from 2016 to 2017.

The award recognizes AAOS members who have demonstrated outstanding leadership qualities that have helped the orthopaedic community, patients and the American public. The award honors and celebrates the life, accomplishments and qualities of the late William W. Tipton Jr., MD, an orthopaedic surgeon, educator and former AAOS executive vice president.

"Dr. Tipton was an early mentor to me when I first got involved in the American Medical Association and I am incredibly honored and humbled to be the recipient of the AAOS Tipton Leadership Award for service," said Dr. Gurman, of Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. "To be recognized by one’s own peers for the work that I have done in organized medicine on behalf of physicians and our patients is very meaningful."

**Why it’s important:** Dr. Gurman is a leader among leaders, according to orthopaedic surgeon Casey Jo Humbyrd, MD, who noted that he is one of only two orthopaedic surgeons to serve as AMA president.

Dr. Gurman, "through his effective leadership as president of the AMA, has forever changed the profession of medicine for surgeons and physicians for the better, while promoting and maintaining our appropriate focus on the patients we serve," said Dr. Humbyrd.

Dr. Gurman's tenure as president of the AMA was a capstone for a career in organized medicine, spanning more than 40 years of leadership and advocacy for the medical profession. His earliest involvement began with the Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society and, shortly thereafter, the Pennsylvania Medical Society in the 1980s.

"He was a regular fixture in Harrisburg, where he built coalitions with trauma surgeons, obstetricians and gynecologists, neurosurgeons and other orthopaedic surgeons," said Dr. Humbyrd. She said that Dr. Gurman "recognized early on that there is strength in numbers, and when members of medicine can come together and fight the good fight together—we are unstoppable."

Dr. Gurman served as speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Delegates from 2003 to 2007 and was later elected speaker of the AMA House of Delegates, serving from 2011 to 2015 before becoming president in 2016.

As AMA president, Dr. Gurman testified before the U.S House Judiciary Committee against the proposed mergers of several large insurance companies, which would have been anti-competitive
and problematic for physicians, particularly those in private practice. Read Dr. Gurman’s AMA Leadership Viewpoints column about that victory, “Fighting together, physicians foil insurance Goliaths.”

In 2017, Dr. Gurman helped lead the AMA’s response to the proposed American Health Care Act (AHCA), which the Congressional Budget Office estimated would result in 24 million more uninsured patients within 10 years.

“As physicians,” he wrote, “we know that uninsured patients live sicker and die younger than patients who have health care coverage. Nothing frustrates us more than having the knowledge and skill to help patients and yet lacking the meaningful ability to do so because patients are uninsured and cannot access care.” Read Dr. Gurman’s 2017 column, “Latest draft of AHCA still doesn’t measure up.”

Learn more: During all of this work, Dr. Gurman has maintained a private practice dedicated to hand surgery in Altoona, Pennsylvania, where he is known for his excellent work, quality and attention to detail. He also currently serves on the AAOS delegation to the AMA.

“Dr. Gurman’s demeanor and passion for making sure that patients remain the first and foremost priority of the medical profession is no secret,” said Michael Suk, MD, JD, MPH, MBA, chief physician officer at Geisinger System Services and a member of the AMA Board of Trustees. "He brings together many voices from disparate backgrounds, finding clarity in the advocacy agenda that could span any specialty for the purpose of patient care."