Jack Resneck Jr., MD, has some steep walls to scale in his new capacity as AMA president. COVID-19 persists despite safe-and-effective vaccines and treatments, and doctors exhausted by the pandemic need a powerful ally to help rebuild the health care system in the right way.

Amid COVID-19, physicians “have really put their lives on the line and they’ve been holding together a health care system that has been stretched far too thin,” the practicing dermatologist and health care policy expert from the San Francisco Bay Area during an episode of “AMA Moving Medicine.”

In the candid interview, Dr. Resneck discussed his ambitious agenda for the coming year, which includes the AMA Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians.

You took care of the nation. It’s time for the nation to take care of you. It’s time to rebuild. And the AMA is ready. The AMA Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians is rebuilding critical components of our profession by:

- Fixing prior authorization.
- Leading the charge to reform Medicare pay.
- Fighting scope creep.
- Supporting telehealth.
- Reducing physician burnout.

Go beyond the exam room

A self-professed “policy nerd,” Dr. Resneck plans to leverage his training in public policy to attain AMA goals.
The people who show up are the ones who set policy, said Dr. Resneck, who has testified on Capitol Hill on behalf of physicians and patients countless times.

“That insider approach, being at the table—it doesn't mean that one has to be meek or apologetic,” he said. “It can be powerful and focused and ... infused with purpose.”

In his inaugural address at the 2022 AMA Annual Meeting, Dr. Resneck pledged to make the AMA Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians the cornerstone of his agenda.

Preventing politicians from interfering in the exam room or criminalizing evidence-based care in reproductive health and gender-affirming care, and trying to stop gun violence, are other key goals.

“There's so much to do and I'm going to be relentless in showing up to get those things done,” he said.

**Tackling prior authorization**

The average U.S. physician is doing an average of 41 prior authorizations a week, “an outrageous number,” Dr. Resneck said.

He has seen firsthand how the system fails patients and affects continuity of care.

One of his patients had been suffering from severe head-to-toe eczema for years. Dr. Resneck managed to get prior authorization for a new biologic drug that transformed this patient's life. After a year, the health plan asked for another prior authorization. After filling out pages of paperwork, the plan denied it, citing that the patient “no longer meets severity criteria.”

Fixing prior authorization is a major legislative priority, he added. “We are supporting a bill in Congress to fix this for Medicare Advantage plans,” he said, referring to the “The Improving Seniors’ Timely Access to Care Act” (H.R. 3173; S. 3018). “We're working with states around the country on some innovative bills to try to get this under control.”

**Strategic thinking on telehealth**

Telehealth, meanwhile, has seen rapid expansion amid the pandemic and physicians have become proficient in figuring out which situations benefit most from virtual care, noted Dr. Resneck.

“For some conditions, integrating telehealth seamlessly into a patient’s care can be fantastic. But if I’ve got a melanoma patient who’s coming in for a full-body check to make sure they don’t have new
skin cancers. That’s not as easy a thing to do via telehealth,” he said.

Dr. Resneck wants to explore the gaps that remain with telehealth and deploy it where it’s most needed, especially to help in the care of chronic conditions such as diabetes and mental health.

Deploying telehealth with an equity lens is also important. “I learned a lot in my practice these last two years during the pandemic,” Dr. Resneck said, noting that many patient populations lack equitable access because they “didn’t have broadband access or the devices to use telehealth as easily.”

“AMA Moving Medicine” highlights innovation and the emerging issues that impact physicians and public health today. You can catch every episode by subscribing to the AMA’s YouTube channel or the audio-only podcast version, which also features educational presentations and in-depth discussions.