Now that studies have made the reasons behind physicians’ professional satisfaction clear, it’s time to implement solutions that let physicians get back to doing what they want to do most—give high-quality care to patients.

That’s what Group Vice President of Professional Satisfaction and Practice Sustainability Michael Tutty, PhD (pictured right), told physicians at a special session Saturday during the 2014 AMA Interim Meeting.

Through its Professional Satisfaction and Practice Sustainability initiative, the AMA has investigated the things that make it difficult to provide high-quality care. An AMA-RAND study released last fall revealed that physicians who feel overworked, overscrutinized or overburdened with unfulfilling tasks can suffer continually from a growing sense that they are neglecting the professional priorities that really matter— their patients.
Factors that lead to dissatisfaction include regulatory burdens, competing professional priorities and burdensome electronic health records (EHR).

Now that the AMA knows what’s behind dissatisfaction, it’s raising the issue in the public sphere and implementing solutions.

Tutty explained that through the next year, the AMA will:

- Engage vendors to incorporate needed changes into future EHR design, training and implementation, and work with other stakeholders to improve EHR usability
- Continue to advocate for greater flexibility in the EHR meaningful use program and other regulatory programs
- Re-craft the physician-hospital relationship of the future promoting an integrated leadership structure
- Investigate new practice and payment models, starting with another study with the RAND Corporation, which will look at how payment models affect physicians’ practices
- Develop ways to provide leadership training for physicians in new practice models

In the meantime, physicians have some ways to improve their professional satisfaction and quality of patient care right now. Beta testing has begun for the first four modules in the AMA’s new online platform STEPS Forward™, which stands for Solutions Toward Effective Practice. These initial
modules will help physicians address common clinical challenges.

The solutions offered address pre-visit planning, prescription renewals, empowering staff to handle more during patient visits and collaborative documentation. The AMA is looking for physician feedback of the beta site. A robust collection of content building on these initial modules will be forthcoming in 2015.