A year of recovery: AMA CXO Todd Unger takes a look back at the progress and key voices of 2022

AMA Update covers a range of health care topics affecting the lives of physicians, residents, medical students and patients. From private practice and health system leaders to scientists and public health officials, hear from the experts in medicine on COVID-19, monkeypox, medical education, advocacy issues, burnout, vaccines and more.

Featured topic and speakers

In today’s AMA Update, AMA Chief Experience Officer Todd Unger shares a special end-of-year feature chronicling physicians’ efforts to help patients and the AMA's pivot toward recovery in 2022.


In the meantime, learn how the AMA is #FightingForDocs and access resources from the AMA Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians.

Join the AMA or renew your membership.

Speaker

- Todd Unger, chief experience officer, AMA

Transcript

Unger: Hello, it's Todd Unger, AMA's chief experience officer. And for our final AMA Update of the year, we're taking a look back at some of the important highlights of 2022. While we experienced some ups and downs, one thing remained constant-- your efforts to help patients, no matter what the challenges you faced.
We rang in 2022 with an Omicron surge, a record number of COVID hospitalizations and thousands of canceled flights. Headlines talked about vaccine mandates, staff shortages and overwhelmed emergency departments. So it was a big deal when, a few weeks later, free at-home COVID tests and N95 masks were made available to everyone.

Physicians were exhausted and stretched thin again. And that’s when the AMA, in renewing its commitment to our nation’s healers, launched a Recovery Plan for America’s Physicians. The AMA COVID Update became the AMA Update. We were determined to make 2022 about recovery and rebuilding, and that's exactly what we did.

**Dr. Hotez:** AMA has stepped up big time during this COVID-19 pandemic.

**Dr. Shah:** It is mission critical if we want to keep everyone in America healthy that we actually implement this recovery plan.

**Unger:** Leading the charge to reform Medicare payment.

**Dr. Resneck:** One of the pillars of that plan is really centered around reforming Medicare payment.

**Askew:** Over the past year, a lot of work has gone into consensus building on what a new Medicare payment system should look like.

**Unger:** Stopping scope creep.

**Dr. Aizuss:** California Assembly Bill A.B. 2236 would have allowed optometrists to perform advanced eye procedures, including surgery. That's why the AMA founded the Scope of Practice Partnership.

**Unger:** Supporting telemedicine as an integrated part of patient care.

**Dr. Maynor:** We learned through the pandemic that utilizing telemedicine with a component of patient monitoring was absolutely essential and, fortunately, possible.

**Dr. Cauwels:** Being able to develop a doctor’s webside manner, not just their bedside manner.

**Unger:** Fixing prior authorization.

**Dr. Madara:** A third of American physicians surveyed report a serious negative consequence to patients in their practice due to prior authorization.

**Delbene:** I think we all have stories—family members, folks we know, who have had delays in access to care because they haven't gotten approval in a timely manner.

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Unger: Reducing physician burnout.

Dr. Shah: Burnout is literally an occupational condition.

Dr. Resneck: Really soared over the course of the pandemic—from 38% up to 63% of physicians reported symptoms of burnout in 2021.

Dr. Shah: So we must focus on addressing these system problems so that we can address burnout and work at the top of our game.

Dr. Resneck: So that's really why the AMA is working at much higher levels, partnering with practices and health systems to implement strategies that we know work.

Unger: At the same time, we continue to cover COVID and other challenges affecting communities. Elevating physician voices on important public health issues.

Dr. Yancy: This story cannot lie dormant. We need to bring this story to the attention of everyone and generate a call to action.

Dr. Parodi: The time to be having that conversation about moving to an endemic state.

Dr. Hotez: We need vaccines for global health.

Dr. Bibbins-Domingo: There is a strong equity component to this as well. Communities of color, communities with less resources had the highest burden of COVID.

Dr. Jha: So we still got to really take care of people who are suffering.

Dr. Ramos: A lot of us go into medicine again, trying to make a difference in that one person's life. But to be able to not only make that difference but to do it in a culturally understanding way.

Dr. Ranney: There is a few root causes of firearm injury and death because it's so much bigger and wider than just violence.

Dr. Mukkamala: Annual drug overdose deaths have reached another record high in the U.S.

Dr. Fryhofer: COVID vaccination and flu vaccination is the best way to protect us from serious illness over the next few months.

Dr. Offit: Our hospital is absolutely overwhelmed with this virus. It is all hands-on deck.

Unger: Focusing on science.
Dr. Harmon: We also had a pandemic of misinformation or disinformation and distrust of public health officials and government.

Dr. Jha: Sitting here at the White House, we can disagree on the margins, we can disagree where the science is unclear, but where the data is clear and the science is clear—really helpful to communicate that directly to the American people.

Dr. Bibbins-Domingo: JAMA published a large study from the Global Burden of Disease investigators, really highlighting the burden of long COVID around the world.

Dr. Iwasaki: The other issue is that we really need a guidance for the physicians to be able to diagnose properly long COVID.

Garcia: CDC findings show that the bivalent booster provided significant additional protection against symptomatic COVID infection.

Dr. Hotez: We now know from data from the CDC that individuals over the age of 50 have had those two boosts on top of the two primary immunizations. That makes all the difference, and that's the message to get out.

Unger: Among many other lessons the pandemic taught us, it highlighted the importance of supporting America’s physicians and coming together.

Dr. Madara: Throughout this remarkable journey of 175 years, we remain the strong voice for American physicians.

Dr. Jha: What gives me optimism is actually thinking about the health care workforce of America, and particularly physicians and other health care providers.

Dr. Resneck: And so my message to my colleagues is that there is hope and we continue to stand united against interference in what we do to advance our patients' health.

Unger: As always, it's been an honor to talk with, elevate and support our nation's physicians, who are making a difference in so many lives and will continue to take our recovery plan to the next level and fight for you. We hope you have a happy, healthy and safe holiday, and we'll see you in 2023.

Disclaimer: The viewpoints expressed in this video are those of the participants and/or do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the AMA.

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