Subject: Training Physicians in the Art of Public Forum  
(Resolution 606-A-18)

Presented by: Jack Resnick, Jr., MD, Chair

Referred to: Reference Committee F  
(Greg Tarasidis, MD, Chair)

INTRODUCTION

At the 2018 Annual Meeting, the House of Delegates referred Resolution 606 as introduced by the delegation from New Jersey to the Board of Trustees, to investigate a proposal that the AMA should “establish a program for training physicians in the art and science of conducting public forums in order to ensure that the public is well informed on the health care system of our country.”

Within the reference committee, there was considerable supportive testimony about the need to improve physicians’ ability to speak publicly. Several who testified believed that the resources needed to undertake training in public speaking are already available throughout the Federation and could be utilized instead of creating new training materials. However, others believed that developing the ability of physicians to positively present themselves in the public arena is too important to leave to other organizations, and that training in public speaking could be offered as a valuable AMA member benefit.

In evaluating the goal and the desired outcome, it is important to survey the existing landscape of resources available to physicians to help inform AMA’s approach.

BACKGROUND

The leading organization that assists individuals with public speaking and leadership development is Toastmasters International. Individuals can improve their speaking and leadership skills by attending one of the 16,400 clubs worldwide. By regularly giving speeches and receiving feedback, individuals can learn to tell their stories and leverage their voices.

AMPAC, the bipartisan political action committee of the American Medical Association, provides high level training to physicians who are considering pursuit of elected office. For those who want to campaign for public office and advocate for issues important to patients and physicians, this is a premiere training program and valuable resource for physicians.

Other general communication resources available by the AMA include STEPS Forward modules on topics like “Conducting Effective Team Meetings” and “Implementing a Daily Team Huddle.”

Within the Federation, several physician groups provide opportunities for training on effective communications, including the American College of Physicians, American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Medical Women’s Association.
Perhaps the leader in providing this training to physicians is the American Association of Physician Leadership (AAPL). Training topics offered by this organization include: “Present like a Pro,” “Delivering Effective Feedback,” “Fundamentals of Physician Leadership: Communication,” and “Improving Communication and Feedback in Healthcare Leadership.” Courses are offered online or in-person. Many of the self-study courses offer the option to watch the video lectures or attend the sessions. A majority of the courses are accessible for up to three years after purchase. The organization also offers live education courses that allow physicians to network with their peers. There are also faculty-led courses that allow physicians to participate in discussions and case studies throughout a six-week class session.

RECOMMENDATION

Physicians who want to learn more about public speaking can leverage existing resources both within and outside the AMA. AMA can make public speaking tips available through online tools and resources that would be publicized on our website. Physicians and physicians-in-training who want to publicly communicate about the AMA’s ongoing work are invited to learn more through the AMA Ambassador program.

Meanwhile, STEPS Forward provides helpful tips to physicians wanting to improve communication within their practice and AMPAC is available for physicians who want to advocate and communicate about the needs of patients and physicians in the pursuit of public office. There are also resources provided to physicians at various Federation organizations and through AAPL to support those who are interested in training of this nature.

Because public speaking is a skill that is best learned through practice and coaching in a small group or one-on-one setting, we also encourage individuals to pursue training through their state or specialty medical society or through a local chapter of Toastmasters International.

The Board of Trustees recommends that the AMA’s Enterprise Communications and Marketing department work to develop online tools and resources that would be published on the AMA website to help physicians learn more about public speaking in lieu of Resolution 606-A-18 and the remainder of the report to be filed.

Fiscal Note: $20,000 for professional fees for external support and capacity to develop these tools and resources.