Whereas, The patient-physician relationship is among the most important elements of our medical profession; and

Whereas, The quality of the patient-physician relationship is crucial to the care of the patient, improving the value of the patient-physician encounter to both parties and greatly enhancing the chances that the patient’s concern can be met; and

Whereas, Dr. Bernard Lown, in his book “The Lost Art of Healing: Practicing Compassion in Medicine” states that “the three thousand year tradition which bonded doctor and patient in a special affinity of trust is being traded for a new type of relationship; healing is replaced with treating, caring is supplanted by managing, and the art of listening is taken over by technology;” and

Whereas, Dr. Lown’s observations are more relevant now than ever before as a result of: (1) increasing time constraints on physicians due to scheduling issues; (2) the intrusion of electronic devices in the consultation room, which can make sustained eye contact between the patient and his/her physician more challenging; and (3) curriculum changes in some medical schools such that history-taking and examination skills are not emphasized as they once were; and

Whereas, As physicians, we owe it to our patients and ourselves to do everything we can to preserve the patient-physician relationship; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association, in an effort to improve professional satisfaction among physicians while also enhancing patient care, conduct a study to identify perceived barriers to optimal patient-physician communication from the perspective of both the patient and the physician, as well as identify healthcare work environment factors that impact a physician’s ability to deliver high quality patient care, including but not limited to: (1) the use versus non-use of electronic devices during the clinical encounter; and (2) the presence or absence of a scribe during the patient-physician encounter, and report back at the 2020 Interim Meeting.

Fiscal note: Modest: Between $1,000 - $5,000.

Received: 04/12/19