

**Physicians Matching the Moment:
Earning public confidence in an era of mistrust**

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Mister Speaker, officers, delegates, physician colleagues, distinguished guests.

Beyonce. Stephen Covey. Mr. Rogers.

I bet you've never heard those three names mentioned in the same sentence before. What could they possibly have in common?

The answer to that question - each reminds us of the importance of trust.

In a classic cover, Beyonce tells us: "Trust in me and I'll be worthy of you."

The late Stephen Covey, author of "The 7 habits of highly effective people", called **trust** "the glue of life. . ." and ". . . the foundational principle that holds all relationships."

And every preschooler's best friend, Mr. Rogers, testified before Congress "One of the first things a child learns *in a healthy family* is **trust**."

I see the significance of those words in my practice as a child and adolescent psychiatrist.

I imagine I'm not alone and everyone in this room can attest to the importance of trust in our relationships, in our daily lives, and in our interactions with our patients.

And yet, unfortunately, we find ourselves today in an era of distrust.

Three in four Americans say they have lost trust in the federal government.

Two in three say we're losing trust in one another.

From advertising and government to media and technology – trust in our American institutions seems near an all-time low.

But do you know who people still trust – and continue to hold in high esteem?

Us ... their doctors.

Physicians are routinely ranked among the most trusted professions.

How have we maintained that level of trust when we see it slipping away in other areas of society?

Because of the values of our profession, and our aspirations to meet the three dimensions of trust ... **competency, honesty and compassion.**

Let's take a closer look at how each of these connect to our work.

First, competency ... which is rooted in our adherence to science and evidence.

Our patients trust their physicians and the AMA because we fight for science ... calling out quackery and snake oil when we see it.

We counter the loud propaganda of anti-science voice with facts.

Consider the anti-vaccine movement, now spreading fear and false information on social media.

The AMA is fighting back by making sure vaccines are widely available and that exemptions in vaccine regulations are solely for medical reasons.

We are fighting back by urging leading social media and technology companies to ensure their platforms only promote accurate, timely and scientifically sound information.

Our patients' trust requires us to do no less.

Evidence tells us our country's history of discriminatory policies has led to health disparities that persist today for women, low-income families and communities of color.

Channeling the difficult lessons learned in our fight for equity in medicine, the AMA, based on policy passed by this House, is committed to the pursuit of health equity and culturally competent care for all patients.

In the last six months, Dr. Aletha Maybank and her team have built a strong foundation for the Center for Health Equity, to ensure that health equity is imbedded into the DNA of our organization and is foundational to all our work.

The evidence tells us that prior authorization delays access to necessary care and may lead to life-threatening emergencies.

That's why the AMA has activated a grassroots campaign – and is advocating for prior authorization reforms in Congress, through the regulatory process, and in legislatures across the U.S.

If insurance companies believe they're more qualified than physicians to decide what patients need, let us be very clear ...

... that's a fight we are willing to have and we will not back down.

The next important characteristic of trustworthiness is ... honesty, or as my grandma used to say, truth-telling.

As physicians, we are honest with our patients ... even when the news may be difficult to share or not what they were expecting.

Bringing that honesty and truth-telling to bear, the AMA uses our voice to speak out for those who – for far too long – had no voice.

That's why the AMA opposes the administration's child separation policy at the southern border, knowing those traumatic experiences will likely lead to adverse health effects over a lifetime.

That's why we support humane treatment for all immigrants ... and why we called for oversight of detention facilities, and access to basic health service, including vaccines.

Children are not supposed to be in cages no matter who, what, why or how.

The AMA is a force for honesty and truth-telling in protecting the LGBTQ community.

That's why we oppose the Pentagon's ban on transgender persons in the military.

Gender identity does not and should not disqualify someone from serving our nation.

And that's why we continue to fight proposals that would eliminate the Affordable Care Act's non-discrimination protections for women and LGBTQ people.

The AMA is a force for honesty and truth-telling in the assault on physicians' freedom of speech.

That's why we fought back when the administration imposed a "gag rule" on physicians under Title X, preventing us from having evidence-based conversations with our patients and recommending appropriate referrals for care.

We fought back when lawmakers in North Dakota passed a law requiring physicians to tell our patients that medical abortion may be "reversible," a patently false claim.

Will patients trust us if we are not thorough in our counseling? Or if we are forced to give false or misleading information?

No, they will not.

The patient-physician relationship is the cornerstone of health care ... and the trust in this relationship depends on open and honest conversations about all of our patient's health care options.

The third dimension of trust is to exhibit care and concern for others ... to demonstrate compassion.

Our patients trust us because they know we are committed to seeing, acknowledging and sharing their human experiences – not only their joy but also their pain.

As President Teddy Roosevelt said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

And by the way, no one has the market cornered on care and compassion ...or heart.

Physicians are caring, compassionate healers. Medicine is a caring, compassionate profession. And our patients rely on our training and our compassion.

They rely on us to not only understand the nuances of diagnosis and treatment, but also how family dynamics may affect a patient's ability to follow a course of care.

Our patients rely on us to understand that the head is connected to the rest of the body and appreciate the connection between mental health and overall health.

They rely on us – and our Code of Ethics demands – that we advocate to change those laws and policies that are contrary to the interests of our patients.

Competency, honesty, and compassion ... the three dimensions of trust.

But to that list there is one more quality that I consider essential ... purpose.

Our purpose is found in our mission – To promote the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health.

But, ultimately, these are just words on paper – noble as they may be. It's up to us to bring our mission to life.

We, the AMA, give life to our mission when we fight for the uninsured ... and the underinsured ... and for anyone who fears the next medical bill could drain their family's savings.

We give life to our mission when we help physicians better care for patients struggling with a substance use disorder ... and when we call on policymakers to enforce mental health parity laws.

When we model a path forward for states and develop a national opioids roadmap, as we did this year, to provide expert guidance in fighting this epidemic.

We give life to our mission when we promote solutions to surprise billing that keep patients out of the middle of conflict and hold insurers accountable.

When we fight for common sense gun laws to keep our communities and neighborhoods safe.

When we pull back the curtain on the dangers of e-cigarettes and vaping ... working at the highest levels to sustain decades of progress on youth smoking.

When we fight for user friendly, interoperable electronic health records ... eliminating one of the major contributors to physician burnout.

When we fight to remove the obstacles of documentation burden that interfere with patient care.

And we give life to our mission when we lead in the new frontier of digital health, AI and technology.

These ongoing efforts shape our organization's purpose – which is why each of us is here today.

Our mission matters. Especially in this moment.

In this era of distrust, I would submit to you ... that the AMA is just what the doctor ordered.

And we – both individually and collectively – are more than a match for this moment.

As I said just a few months ago, we, the physicians of the AMA, believe we can uplift our entire profession.

We believe we can improve care for ALL of our 300-plus million fellow Americans ...

... and stand as leaders in health care across the globe.

We can do this because people trust us ... and because we will always strive to be worthy of their trust.

I began with Beyonce, and so I'll close Beyonce, who once said ... "I don't like to gamble, but if there's one thing I'm willing to bet on, it's myself."

I'll channel Beyonce and say ... I don't like to gamble, but if there's one thing I'm willing to bet on it's you, my colleagues ...

... our profession

... and our AMA.

Thank you.

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