REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

B of T Report 26-A-24

Subject: Equity and Justice Initiatives for International Medical Graduates

Presented by: Willie Underwood, III, MD, MSc, MPH, Chair

Referred to: Reference Committee F

BACKGROUND

At the 2023 Annual Meeting of the American Medical Association (AMA) House of Delegates (HOD), Resolution 605-A-23, “Equity and Justice Initiatives for International Medical Graduates,” sponsored by the International Medical Graduates Section, was referred to the Board of Trustees. Resolution 605-A-23 requested:

1. That our American Medical Association, via the Center for Health Equity, create a yearly session (during the Interim or Annual Meeting) as a part of the equity forum that will be dedicated to international medical graduates (Directive to Take Action); and

2. That our AMA, via the Center of Health Equity, create an amendment to the health equity plan that will address the issues of equity and justice for international medical graduates. (Directive to Take Action)

DISCUSSION

This report seeks to provide clarity to two questions: (1) Whether the AMA should, via the Center for Health Equity, create a yearly session (during the Interim or Annual Meeting) as part of the equity forum that will be dedicated to international medical graduates; and (2) Whether the AMA should, via the Center for Health Equity, create an amendment to the health equity plan that will address the issues of equity and justice for international medical graduates.

AMA Health Equity Open Forum

In 2022, at the Annual Meeting, the HOD adopted new policy titled “Continuing Equity Education G-600.960”, which instructed AMA to establish an Open Forum on Health Equity, to be held at least annually at a House of Delegates Meeting, for members to directly engage in educational discourse and strengthen organizational capacity to advance and operationalize equity.

Prior to its adoption, Resolution 611-A-22, as it was known at the time, was discussed openly during the Reference Committee F Hearing. The resulting committee report provided:

Reference Committee heard supportive testimony acknowledging the importance of prioritizing equity through forums, education sessions, and other programming. Testimony supported changing the frequency of educational opportunities to each House of Delegates meeting, noting that it will increase education and awareness of the effects of bias, prejudice, and racism in medicine. During testimony, it was mentioned that a call for
education sessions is made prior to each House of Delegates meeting. For the June 2022
meeting, the Center for Health Equity opted to host education sessions in lieu of an open
forum. Format and timing of educational sessions at the House of Delegates is at the
discretion of the Speakers in consultation with subject matter experts. In addition, the
proffered language allows for the potential of additional sessions offered online,
asynchronous to the House of Delegates meeting, or even at other AMA sponsored
meetings.¹

The report provides many details, but it appears that delegates and attendees did not discuss specific
subject matter to be presented at each open forum, subsequently leaving the policy open to interpretation.
This is not an uncommon practice, if one were to skim through AMA policy, they would find that many
organizational policies have been adopted in the same manner relying on staff experts to take the lead on
executing requested actions.

If we can infer anything from the HOD’s decision to adopt the policy on Continuing Equity Education
with its current language, it would be that the HOD reserved the task of making equity-based decisions on
content development for the open forum for AMA staff. Since the policy was adopted at the 2022 Annual
Meeting, the Center for Health Equity has taken the lead on planning and has successfully hosted two
forums. During the planning and development stages, staff consistently prioritizes equity by ensuring
diverse perspectives are represented; considering the unique needs and experiences of all potential
attendees to create inclusive content that resonates with a wide audience; focusing on time-sensitive
topics to operationalize equity; and regularly assessing and adjusting their approach to address any
disparities and promote fairness in the planning and development process. To permanently designate a
particular topic or group over others would be counterproductive to the ideals of fairness and equity and
risks the possibility of harm, creating an atmosphere of resentment and discouragement among those who
may feel excluded or unfairly treated. Instead, AMA staff has employed an equitable content planning
and development process that balances the consideration of competing recommendations. Since policy
does require an equity forum at least once a year, each meeting presents an additional opportunity to
educate the House on a variety of equity-based topics, which can include, but is not limited to, issues
related to IMGs.

AMA Strategic Plan to Embed Racial Justice and Advance Health Equity

In 2021, the Center for Health Equity published the AMA Strategic Plan to Embed Racial Justice and
Advance Health Equity. The 86-page document is a comprehensive initiative aimed at addressing
systemic inequities in healthcare. Rooted in the recognition of historical injustices and social drivers of
health, the plan outlines strategic actions to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within the medical
community. It emphasizes the need for culturally competent care, increased representation of minoritized
and marginalized individuals in healthcare leadership, and the dismantling of barriers that perpetuate
racial and ethnic disparities. The Strategic Plan has sought to accomplish many goals, but the document
was also scheduled to sunset in 2023. To continue the work that the first Strategic Plan initiated, the
AMA has pushed forward with the development of the next iteration of the Plan. Following the goals
outlined in the first Strategic Plan, the second plan will go further by highlighting IMGs specifically, their
potential for advancing health equity amid significant challenges in training and working within the U.S.
It will also include details related to recent policy developments, accomplishments, and a call to action for
AMA. Prior to its release, authors of the Plan have worked closely with AMA IMG Section leadership to
thoroughly review and ensure that IMG perspectives are prominent in the document. At the 2024 Annual
Meeting, the Health Equity Open Forum will be an overview of the 2024-2025 Strategic Plan with
designated time to focus on IMG issues and perspectives. Our AMA will continue to support IMGs by
advocating for fair and transparent processes in licensing, protection of all rights and privileges, and
recognizing the valuable contributions IMGs make to the U.S. health care system.
RECOMMENDATION

The Board of Trustees recommends that Resolution 605-A-23 not be adopted and that the remainder of this report be filed.

Fiscal Note: None.

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