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Why the AMA is (now) worth joining

Until recently, I was not a member of the American Medical Association (AMA). For the past 30 years, I chose not to join because I was troubled by the organization's direction and the way it seemed to be dominated by special interests. But things have changed—and so has its focus.

The AMA has a new strategy entitled, "A vision for a healthier nation." Well aligned with the needs of family physicians, the campaign addresses 3 specific areas: better patient health, smarter medical training, and sustainable practices.

■ **Better patient health.** The AMA is partnering with several public health-oriented organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

The new AMA is a different organization from the one I chose not to join for the past 30 years.

to reach out to individuals with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cardiac risk factors to promote primary and secondary prevention strategies at a population level. This is a very different posture than the AMA assumed in the early 20th century, when it was more likely to resist public health programs.

■ **Smarter medical training.** Under the direction of family physician Susan Skochelak,

MD, MPH, group vice president for medical education, the AMA has provided grant funding to 31 US medical schools to assist with curricular redesign and innovation to train physicians to be effective leaders in the health care system of the future.

■ **Sustainable practices.** This area houses what is perhaps the AMA's most meaningful new program for primary care clinicians. Under the leadership of general internist Christine A. Sinsky, MD, PhD, vice president for professional satisfaction, the AMA has developed a suite of Web tools to help physicians improve the quality and efficiency of their clinical practices.

Specifically, the AMA is offering the STEPS Forward program, a collection of interactive, educational modules developed by physicians for physicians to help address common practice challenges and to achieve the quadruple aim of a better patient experience, better population health, lower overall costs, and improved professional satisfaction.¹ The 27 modules are self-directed, group learning exercises that encompass a wide range of thorny issues we deal with on a daily basis. A sampling of topics includes: preparing your practice for change, revenue cycle management, synchronized prescription renewals, and creating a strong team culture.

Programs like these are evidence that the new AMA is a different organization from the one I chose not to join for the past 30 years. I am now a member. Check it out; it might be time for you to join, too.

1. STEPS Forward Series and CME Accreditation. American Medical Association Web site. Available at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/about-ama/strategic-focus/physician-practices/steps-forward.page>. Accessed March 16, 2016.

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