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PRESS RELEASES

AMA adopts new policies on final day of Annual Meeting

JUNE 15, 2016

CHICAGO — The American Medical Association (AMA), the premier national physician organization in the country, adopted several new policies today that touch on a diverse array of public policy issues.

Creating a program to dispose of unwanted medications

With a flood of unused medications already in circulation, the AMA called for the pharmaceutical industry to fund a program to dispose of unwanted medications as hazardous waste. Estimates indicate that between 30 percent and 80 percent of patients do not finish prescriptions for common medication, including pain medication. Many of these drugs are discarded at home. The U.S. Geological Survey sampled rivers and streams and found that up to 80 percent showed traces of drugs, hormones, steroids and personal care products.

"Many of these unused medications, most notably opioids, are diverted and used by someone other than the patient," said AMA President-Elect David O. Barbe, M.D. "Manufacturers should be stewards of

their products throughout their lifecycle and provide this critical service to patients and our environment."

Insurance parity for telemedicine

With telemedicine playing an increasingly critical role in patient care, the AMA called for parity laws to require private insurers to cover telemedicine-provided services comparable to that of in-person services.

"The AMA has supported state medical societies in developing telemedicine policies, which have provided tremendous benefit to rural communities. But these benefits will continue to be limited if patients must pay out of pocket for the services that should be covered by insurance," said AMA Board Member Russell W. H. Kridel, M.D.

Warnings urged for lawyer ads targeting medications

With TV viewers inundated by ads warning about the dangers of pharmaceuticals, the AMA today recommended that such advertisements come with a warning that patients should first consult with a physician before discontinuing medications.

"The onslaught of attorney ads has the potential to frighten patients and place fear between them and their doctor. By emphasizing side effects while ignoring the benefits or the fact that the medication is FDA approved, these ads jeopardize patient care. For many patients, stopping a prescribed medication is far more dangerous, and we need to be looking out for them," said AMA Board Member Russell W. H. Kridel, M.D.

Supporting addiction medicine to help address opioid epidemic

The AMA adopted policy today supporting the American Board of Preventive Medicine's (ABPM) establishment of addiction medicine as a multispecialty-sponsored subspecialty. This new subspecialty was approved by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) and will be available to qualified physicians who are diplomates of any of the 24 ABMS member boards. The policy adopted today also encourages ABPM to expeditiously offer the first addiction medicine certification examination to physicians.

"We applaud the American Board of Preventive Medicine for establishing addiction medicine as a new subspecialty because we believe that having more physicians specifically trained to treat addiction will help improve access to care and help combat the nation's opioid epidemic," said AMA Board Member Patrice A. Harris, M.D.

Eliminating sales tax on feminine hygiene products

The American Medical Association supports legislation to remove all sales tax on feminine hygiene products. Five states no longer charge a sales tax on these products and more are considering similar legislation.

"Feminine hygiene products are essential for women's health, and taxes on them are a regressive penalty," said AMA President-Elect David O. Barbe, M.D. "We applaud the states that have already

eliminated sales taxes on these products, and we urge every state to follow suit."

Regulating dry needling

The AMA adopted a policy that said physical therapists and other non-physicians practicing dry needling should — at a minimum — have standards that are similar to the ones for training, certification and continuing education that exist for acupuncture.

"Lax regulation and nonexistent standards surround this invasive practice. For patients' safety, practitioners should meet standards required for licensed acupuncturists and physicians," AMA Board Member Russell W. H. Kridel, M.D.

Packaging air guns with safety equipment

The AMA today encouraged educating consumers on the safety benefits of protective eyewear when using air guns. Eye injuries from non-powder guns (e.g., paint ball and air guns) are a leading cause of serious pediatric eye injuries, climbing by 600 percent since 2010.

"The increase in air gun use has not been met with increased safety awareness. Many of these injuries result in lasting changes in sight and can be avoided by wearing proper eye protection," said AMA President-Elect David O. Barbe, M.D.

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