



From Patient to Policy: Physician Leadership in a New Era

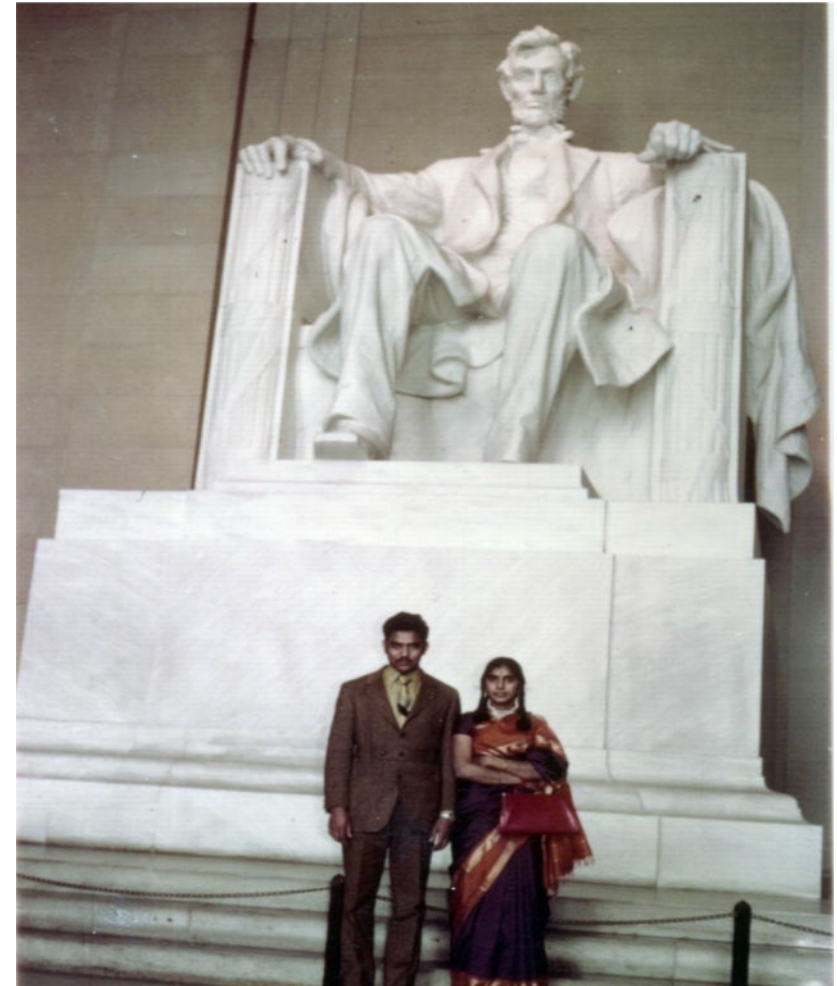
Bobby Mukkamala, MD
Immediate Past President
American Medical Association

October 2026

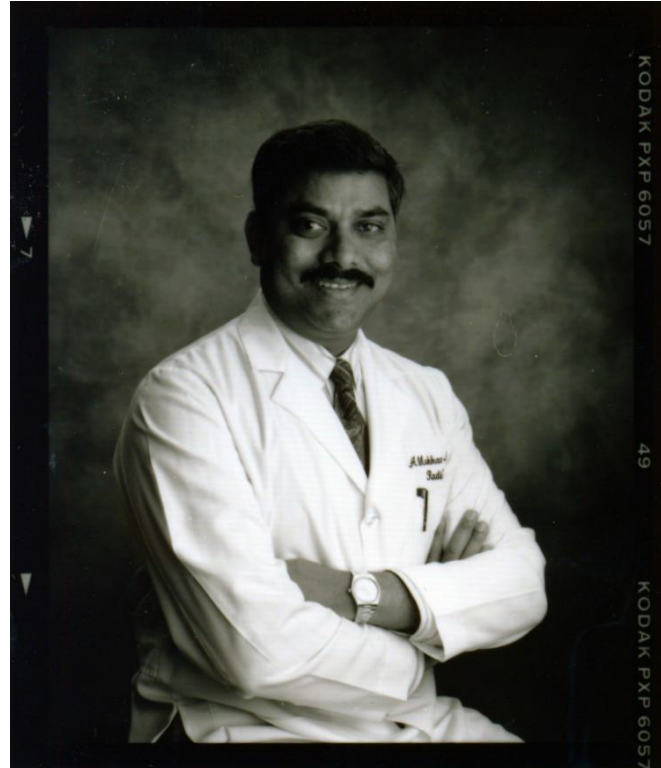
How my journey shapes my view of healthcare



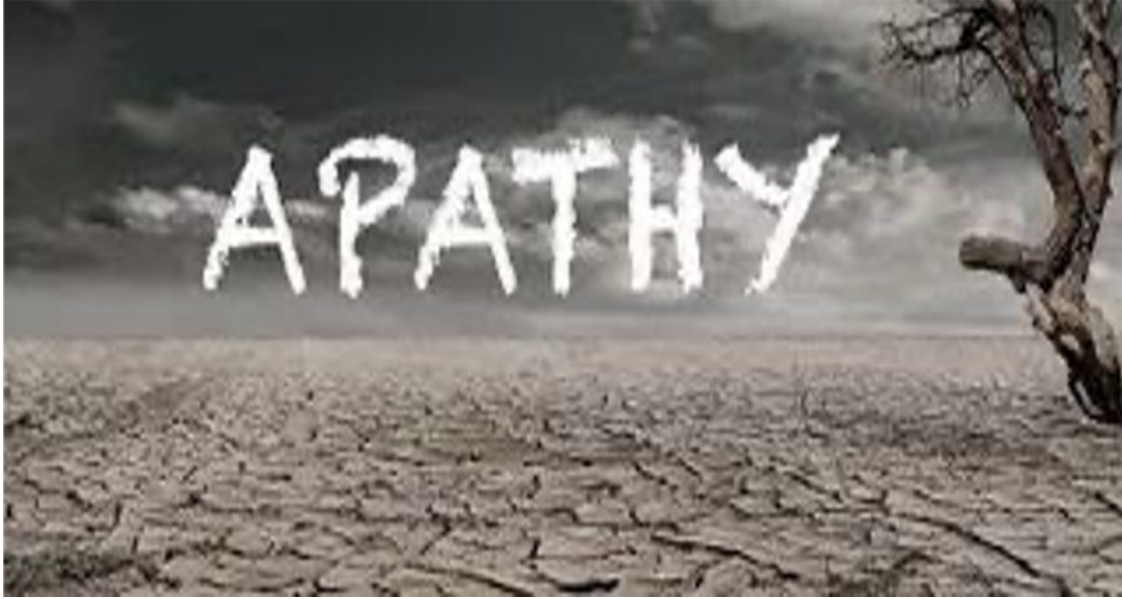
An immigrant story



An immigrant story



Me ... for a long time



Leave it better than we found it...for them



My diagnosis



And recovery



- Type of cancer
- How it was discovered
- Course of treatment
- How I'm using my AMA leadership platform

How a sudden diagnosis changed how I look at healthcare



“....as my life ran into the challenge of brain cancer, I had no idea that I would be able to continue to participate in our collective work, but here I am.”

Why we need physician leaders



Concerning health trends in the U.S.

- Too few physicians to meet needs of an aging population
- Growing chronic disease burden – even in young adults
- Widening health and income inequalities in rural and underserved communities
- Increasing consolidation in healthcare squeezing physicians and reducing choices for patients
- Reduced access to care and soaring costs



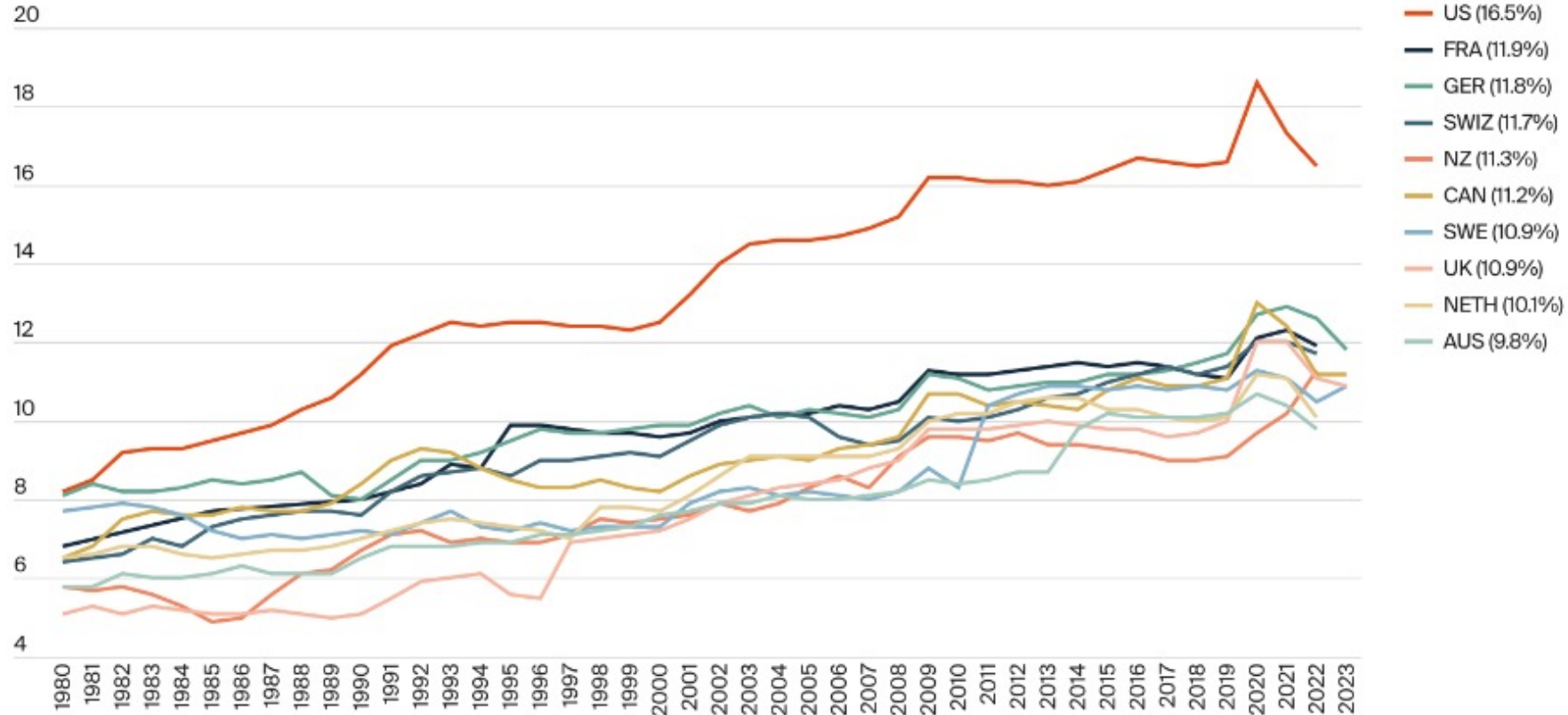
The weight physicians carry

Expanding administrative bureaucracy and paperwork
Attacks on science and misinformation campaigns
Government interference into patient-physician autonomy
Surging chronic disease
Economic pressures and uncertainty
Lack of trust in medical institutions
Concerning levels of professional burnout
Questions about AI and emerging health technology

EXHIBIT 3 – Health Care Spending

Health Care Spending as a Percentage of GDP, 1980–2023

Percent (%) of GDP

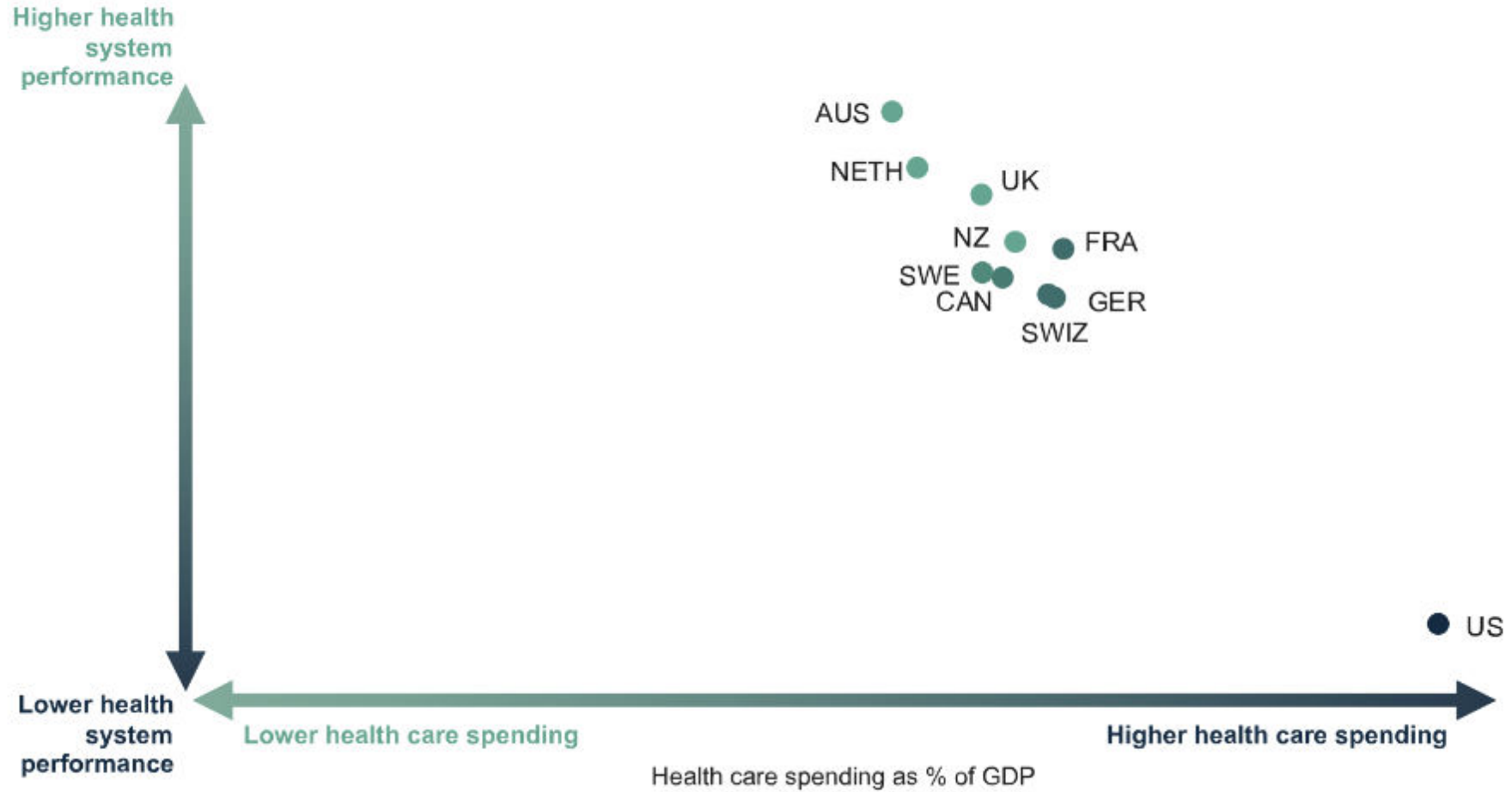


Notes: GDP = gross domestic product. Current expenditures on health. Based on System of Health Accounts methodology, with some differences between country methodologies.

* Data for CAN, GER, SWE, and the UK from 2023; data for AUS, FRA, NETH, NZ, SWIZ, and the US from 2022.



Health Care System Performance Compared to Spending

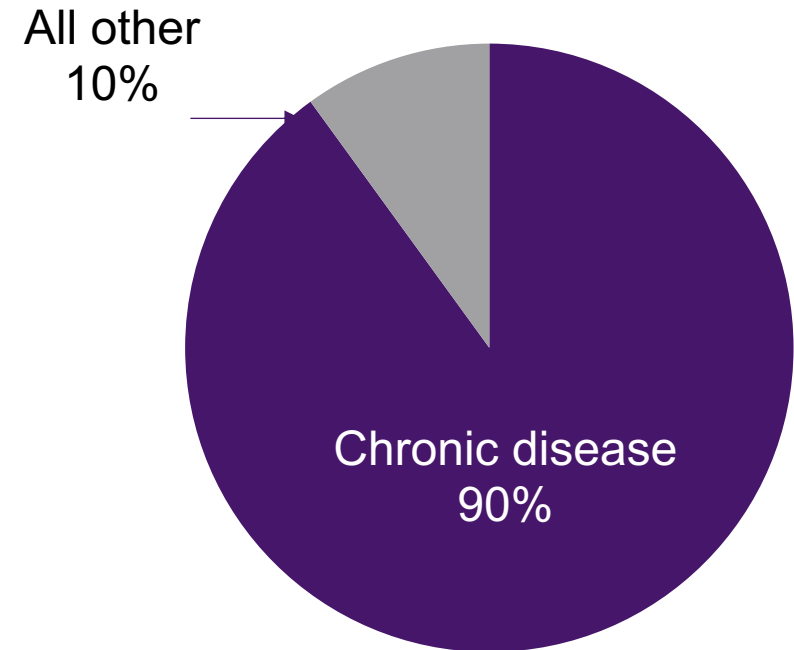


Notes: GDP = gross domestic product. Health care spending as a percentage of GDP. Performance scores are based on standard deviation calculated from the nine-country average that excludes the US. See "How We Conducted This Study" for more detail.

The steep toll of chronic disease in the U.S.

- Roughly half of American adults have one or more chronic conditions.
- Heart disease, stroke and diabetes among top 10 leading causes of death and disability in the U.S.
- Chronic disease negatively impacts health, quality of life and productivity

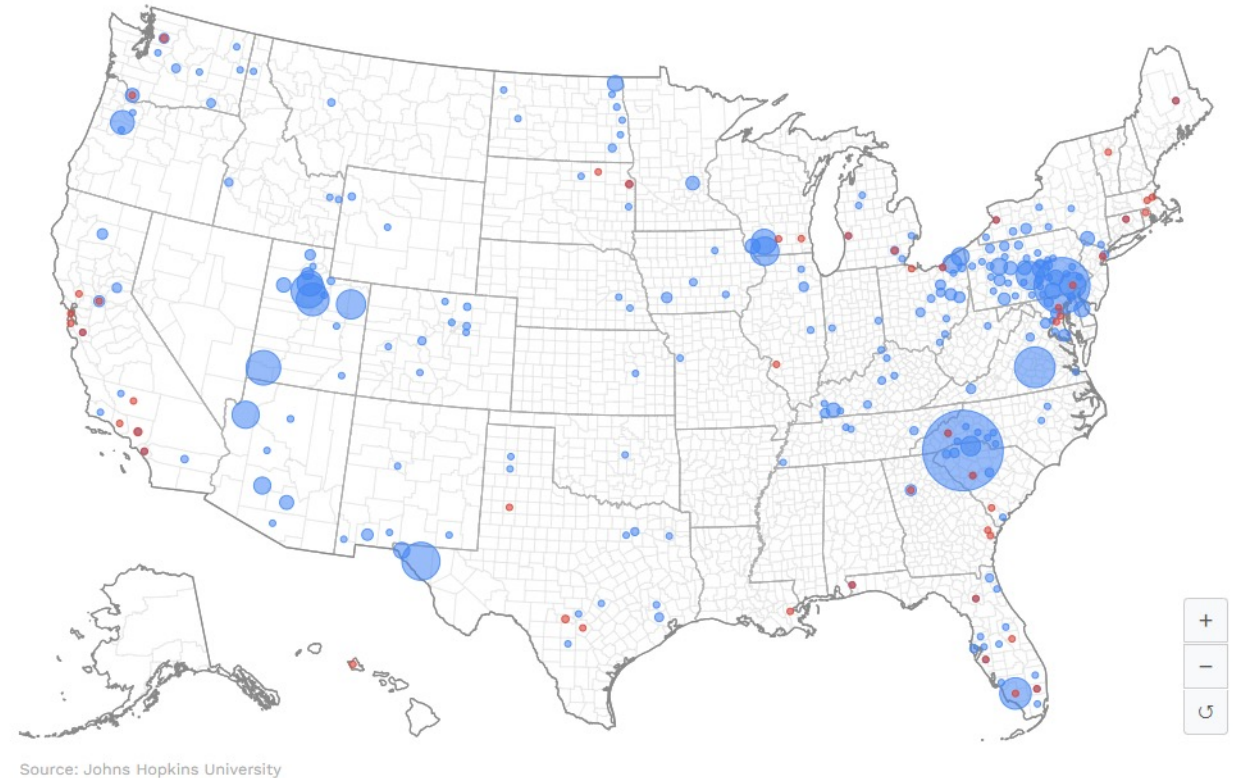
\$5.3 trillion annual U.S. healthcare spending



Source: CDC

Vaccine distrust fuels measles outbreak

- Measles eliminated in the U.S. in 2000
- Falling vaccine rates post-pandemic largely responsible for measles outbreaks in more than 20 states.
- Roughly 1 in 5 unvaccinated people in U.S. who contract measles will be hospitalized.
- Routine childhood vaccination coverage has decreased in more than half of U.S. states since 2019.*



*KFF

Source: Johns Hopkins, U.S. Measles Tracker

Advocacy is part of being a physician



AMA Advocacy: Leadership means fixing the system

- Reforming Medicare payments
- Tackling prior authorization
- Stopping scope creep
- Reducing burnout and improving physician well-being
- Advancing digital health, including AI and telehealth



AMA policy supports ...

“... policies that **preserve physician ownership**, governance, and independent medical judgment in physician practices and

opposes corporate ownership or contractual arrangements that permit non-licensed entities to exercise control over the practice of medicine.”



How the AMA supports independent practice

- **Advancing Medicare payment reform** to ensure physician practices remain financially sustainable.
- **Reducing administrative burdens**, including prior authorization.
- **Protecting physician autonomy** and clinical decision-making from outside interference.
- **Promoting competition** and addressing consolidation that limits physician independence and patient choice.
- **Providing practice management resources** to help physicians navigate financial, operational and regulatory challenges.
- **Supporting physician-led innovation**, including technology and AI that improve efficiency without compromising clinical judgment.
- **Strengthening the physician workforce** and expanding opportunities for physicians to pursue private practice.

We need a rational Medicare payment system

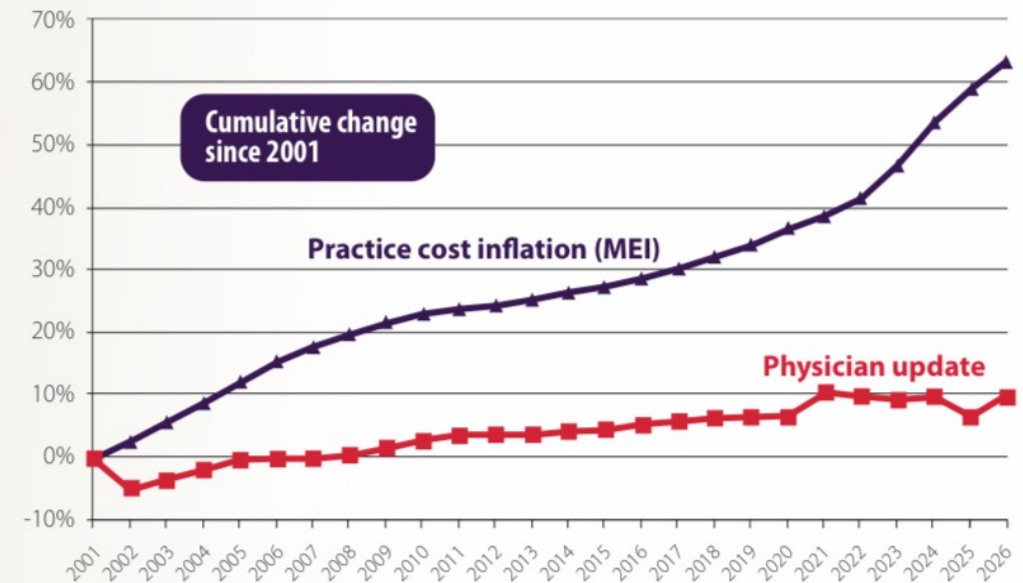
Physician Medicare payment has declined **33%** since 2001.

Reform must provide financial stability, annual inflation-based payment updates.

Medicare physician payment continues to fall further behind practice cost inflation

Medicare Physician Updates Compared to Inflation in Practice Costs (2001-2026)

Adjusted for inflation in practice costs, Medicare physician payment **declined 33%** from 2001 to 2026.



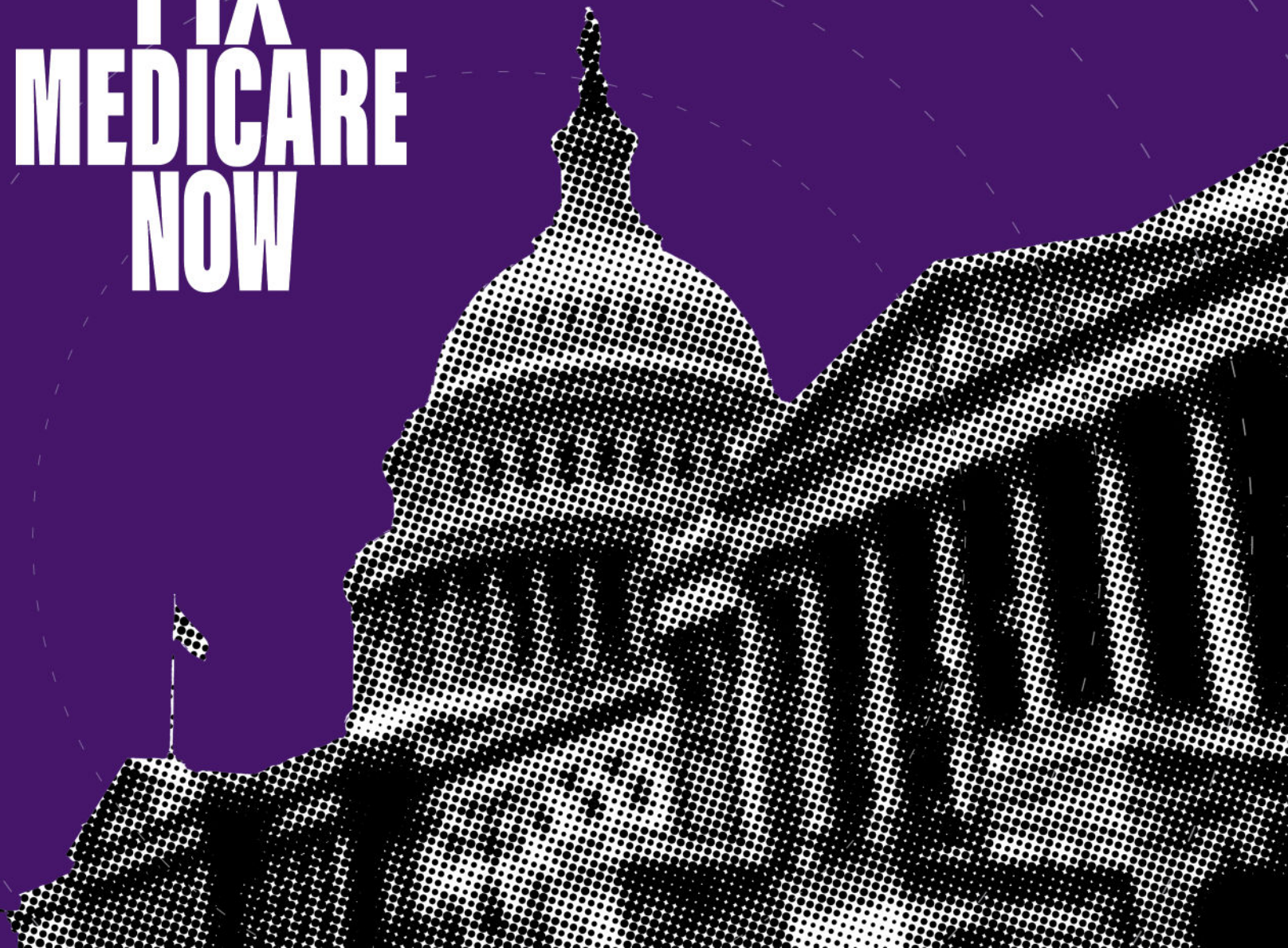
Sources: Federal Register, Medicare Trustees' Reports, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Market Basket Data, and Quality Payment Program (QPP) Experience Report. Note: In 2026, qualified participants in an Advanced APM received a different update from non-qualified participants. Data from the PFS final rule and QPP report were used to construct a weighted average of the physician update for 2026.

Updated Jan. 2026

We need to fix Medicare physician payment NOW.



**FIX
MEDICARE
NOW**



Progress in action: Patients First Act bill

Preserving access to care for Medicare patients

The bipartisan bill in the U.S. House is the most significant effort in years to fix Medicare physician payment.

- **Recognizes** that administrative burden is also a patient care issue.
- **Rewards** better outcomes, not just more reporting.
- **Strengthens** independent medicine by creating new incentives and programs.
- **Modernizes** outdated Medicare policies by reforming budget neutrality.
- **Expands** opportunities for physicians to participate in value-based care.



Limiting the impact of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act

The AMA continues to work to protect patient access to affordable coverage and to provide resources needed by physicians, patients and states by:

- **Pressing federal agencies** to prioritize patient access in implementing regulations
- **Creating and sharing advocacy tools**
- **Providing resources** to help physicians understand the impact of the changes on their patients:
 - Medicaid work requirements
 - Healthcare for noncitizens



AMA Litigation Center: Protecting Medicaid's medically frail patients

- Congress recognized that medically frail people should be protected from losing Medicaid coverage due to work requirements.
- CMS regulations add a new requirement, threatening people with serious medical conditions with losing coverage and creating an unnecessary paperwork burden.
- AMA joined *Massachusetts v. Oz* challenging parts of the rule.



Momentum building for true prior auth reforms

- 23 states enacted prior auth reforms in 2025
- At least 20 prior auth bills being considered in 2026
- Growing federal recognition (CMS WISeR model)
- NCOIL, NAIC moving toward reforms



Join us: **FixPriorAuth.org**

AMA continues push for federal PA legislation

Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act

- Reintroduced with lower CBO cost estimate.
- Expands on prior auth reforms by CMS.

Reducing Medically Unnecessary Delays in Care Act

- Would ensure PA treatment decisions would be made by specialty board-certified physicians for some plans.

The Patient Access to Autoimmune Treatments Act

- Reforms associated with autoimmune and blood disorders

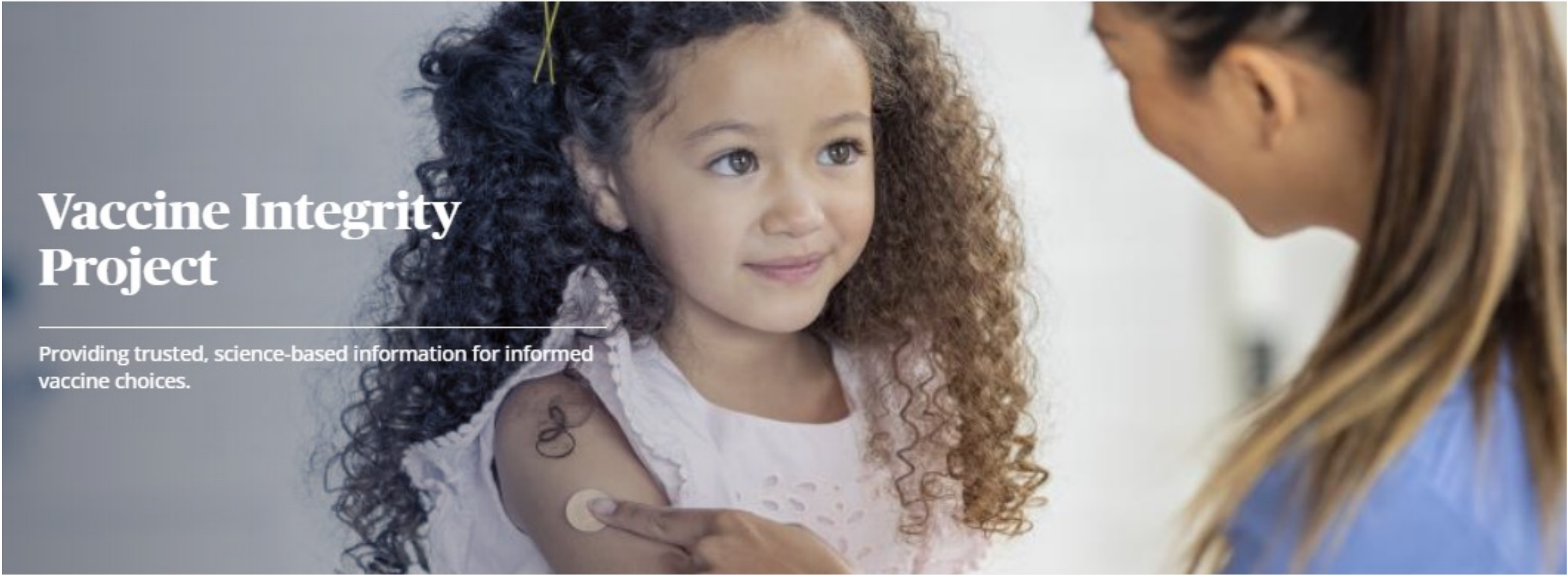
AMA applauds new dietary guidelines

- New dietary guidelines spotlights how highly processed foods, sugar-sweetened beverages, and excess sodium fuel chronic illnesses.
- AMA released a set of commitments to improve clinical competency, deliver educational resources for physicians, and work with Congress to enact meaningful, lasting nutrition change that can improve lives.



"My relationship with them has been pretty antagonistic on the vaccine issue, but on this issue they agree with me, and I welcome their support," Kennedy said in the interview.

American Medical Association president Dr. Bobby Mukkamala attended the White House unveiling of the guidelines and praised them without reservation in a statement. Kennedy said he received a letter from the doctor when he first entered office and has a good relationship with him.



Vaccine Integrity Project

Providing trusted, science-based information for informed vaccine choices.



**Help us create
a better
healthcare
future**

Join us!





Physicians' powerful ally in patient care