Cure sometimes, treat often, comfort always.

— Hippocrates

Six simple words, attributed to Hippocrates centuries ago, still offer a wonderful blueprint for the successful practice of medicine. The best physicians strive to cure, are skilled at treatment, and are deeply connected to their patients through empathy. And by pursuing these standards through the ages they have built a profession that is highly respected and valued in virtually every culture. In this, *JMR's* biennial issue featuring the **FSMB Census of Licensed Physicians in the United States** (page 7), we offer demographic information about these men and women of medicine — nearly a million of them working in the U.S. — and highlight trends of importance to the future of health care. We learn, for example, that our physician workforce is aging: In 2018, the mean age of licensed physicians reached 51.5 years, with 30% of these physicians 60 years of age or older. The census also tells us that the percentage of licensed female physicians is on the rise: The growth of the female-physician population increased between 2010 and 2018 by 37%, compared to 8% for male physicians. While there is good reason to celebrate all of the dedicated physicians who are striving to meet the ideals of Hippocrates, we also confront in this issue of *JMR* the reality that a small number of them run into trouble over the course of their careers. In our second article, a group of health care leaders examine how one such issue — health problems such as mental illness or substance abuse in physicians — can be impacted by **the presence and phrasing of questions they must answer on their applications for medical licensing** (page 24). We learn that the phrasing of these questions may actually *discourage* physicians from seeking appropriate treatment due to fear of stigmatization — exacerbating a health problem. Other physicians may run into ethical and legal problems — and that's when they get the attention of state medical boards, which evaluate them for possible violations of the medical practice act. The way these violations are entered into the public record can have repercussions on a physician's career, and our final article in this issue explores how the **language of state medical board actions can impact a physician's specialty board certification** (page 33). Work is needed to create a system that more consistently categorizes these actions. Much food for thought in this issue — we hope you enjoy.

Heidi M. Koenig, MD
Editor-in-Chief

Copyright 2019 Federation of State Medical Boards. All Rights Reserved.