

Inaugural Speech
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Honored colleagues, dear friends,

Humbled by the distinguished work of my predecessors let me first express my gratitude to Dr Barbe, for your excellent work as president during the past year. It has been a challenging year of office, but you have managed to be present despite the lack of in person meetings.

I want to thank the Swedish Medical Association, for putting your trust in me and supporting my candidacy. This is the effort of many, but I especially thank the board and President Sofia Rydgren Stale and CEO Hans Dahlgren - keeping the organization on top to the benefit of all of us engaging in organized medicine. A special thank to our international secretary Tomas Hedmark; always on track and on time. Thank you all for good teamwork and for true friendship. Thank also to Björn Zoega for including me in the leadership of Karolinska University Hospital where I now serve.

My deepest gratitude to my family; My two wonderful children Nora and Fröja. You have spent many hours underneath boardroom tables, on a coach in the office or in the back of a conference room waiting for me. My dear parents who have supported me in every way and who are the most wonderful grandparents. I could not have made it without you. Thank you!

Colleges, friends, and family are important, especially in times like this.

....over 230 million COVID cases since the start of the pandemic...and over 4.7 million deaths.

But we are fighting back.... With almost 6 billion vaccines given worldwide.

All of us have faced personal and professional challenges during the pandemic, and a virulent virus still ravages our world. Healthcare has been pushed to the limit. Physicians have toiled on the frontlines, risking self and family to provide care to countless patients that have fallen ill to Covid-19. The working conditions are beyond challenging. Many physicians have become victims of the virus, and some of us have died while caring for others.

The pandemic has shown that we share a very small world. What happens in one corner of our planet affects us all; the "Butterfly Effect" has never been demonstrated more poignantly. Physicians everywhere strive for that same effect, hoping that providing good medical care to

patients in their corner of the world will translate into a “global defense.” Viruses know no borders, but neither do medicine or the ethics that guide us.

The pandemic has raised difficult questions and some grim ethical and moral quandaries

- How do we prioritize care?
- What are the best vaccines and vaccination programs?
- What is the fairest method to distribute resources?

Patients, populations, and governments look to us for guidance when health is at stake, and these difficult questions about the ethical practice of medicine must be addressed. The WMA must lead the way – providing a firm foundation to respond to these challenges that remain critical to every man, woman, and child on our planet.

Let us not forget that ‘ethics’ is the core of the WMA.

“The health and well-being of my patient will be my first consideration” and “I will share my medical knowledge for the benefit of the patient and the advancement of healthcare.” Words we promote and the pledge by which we live.

The WMA policies are frameworks and guidelines implemented by physicians and institutions every day all over the world. The vision of my Hospital is “We will cure and relieve tomorrow what no one can cure or relieve today”.

A vision that has come through recently is the advancement to produce a vaccine against malaria. This is fruits of years and years of hard work by vital organizations on a global level.

Next to the vaccine, global cooperation is the most crucial component to fight disease and this virus in particular. No other physician organization has the inclusiveness and reach of the WMA; therefore, we need to help bridge governments and borders. As the most important international organization for physicians, we should foster even more robust cooperation between international organizations. It is important to continue to engage in, and deepen our relations and cooperation with the WHO on issues of common interest. Efficient and effective initiatives, such as CEPI, Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, or GAVI, co-leading COVAX distributing covid-19 vaccines, has a better chance to succeed when global agreements are in place. I urge all of our national members to promote your countries to support the global institutions.

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of medical research and development. Vaccines, their development, and distribution have been at the center of the pandemic. And the speed with which vaccines have been developed is awe-inspiring and demonstrates what can be achieved in a global emergency.

Medical research always raises ethical questions, even more so in situations where there is intense pressure to achieve results quickly. The pandemic has put us under extreme pressure; with demands for revolutionary research results leading to new therapies and vaccines to be provided to patients quicker than ever. Under such conditions ethical guidelines are crucial. The [WMA Declaration of Helsinki](#) guiding in ethical issues related to medical research involving human subjects. I take office highly aware of the necessity that this core WMA declaration must continue to be well-known. It must remain a relevant touchstone of ethics in medical research.

At the core of good research and good medical practice is a solid basis in evidence-based medicine. There has been and continues to be, fearmongering, misinformation, and false claims. Some of these claims are highly concerning and present potentially serious health risks to global health. We have a responsibility to speak out against fraudulent claims, to represent science. We are also responsible for explaining this science in ways the general public can grasp and comprehend. Moving forward, this will be an increasingly important task for the WMA. As president of the WMA I will add “vaccinate!” to the quote “test, test, test” made by Theodor, Director-General of the WHO.

Many physicians and researchers have worked tirelessly to get us back to a more normal life. Thinking about a “normal” life again, we should remind ourselves of the necessity to ensure a sustainable life for all of us on our planet. Nature continues to be an essential source for developing new patient treatments. The new vaccines are such examples, partly founded upon research in biology. If the loss of biodiversity continues, we will be less resilient. The WMA has vital policies on environmental issues. As president, I stress the importance to highlight the value of protecting our environment to achieve sustainability. Our *future* patients’ health depends on it.

As physicians, our colleagues worldwide stand at the center of health, and the WMA should be the global guiding light for all of us.

Please help me continue to build a strong international voice for the WMA, a voice that speaks for every Physician on our small planet.

Thank you for electing me as your president. The honor humbles me. I will do my best to represent you and the WMA.