What Physicians Still Love about Medicine

By Gabriel Perna
"Yes. I still love what I do. Let me rephrase that. I love practicing medicine. When I see a patient's diabetes improve, when I talk to them about their grandkids, when I can tell them a tumor is benign, when patients refer friends and family (the ultimate compliment) — all reminders of why is still do this. Oh, and the thank you cards and gifts help too."
Jeffrey Blank, MD, a Crystal Lake, Ill.-based podiatric surgeon

"If being a physician means treating patients then the answer is ‘yes.’ There’s still no greater reward for me than doing a surgery that helps my patient. I’m still more comfortable in the operating room than anywhere else. I love the control, the demand, the creativity, the stress, and the thought that I’ve done something good for a person. If being a physician means running a business, tolerating insurance companies, getting precertification or an [radiology quality initiative] number, complying with MIPS or PQRS or trying to establish meaningful use, or whatever the government pushes on me, then no."
Elizabeth Seymour, MD, a Denton, Texas-based family medicine physician

"I still enjoy the conversations and relationship that I've made with my current patients. I've become even more empathetic to their current health situation, and it makes me grateful for my own health. This makes me continue to love my job as a physician, and to continue my career; even if there is a ton of insurance nonsense we have to deal with on a daily basis."
Mark Birmingham, MD, a Boulder, Colo.-based podiatric surgeon

"I believe as the healthcare climate changes with new regulations and the ever present question of whether or not we will get paid for provided services appropriately, we truly get to reflect on the fact that we are helping other humans in their quest to improve their health. If one continues to love having multiple, daily conversations with people around a subject about which you have a specific knowledge base, then, yes, I will still love being a physician in 2017."
Deborah Winiger, MD, a Vernon Hills, Ill.-based family medicine physician

"I think it is possible to still love being a physician ... the relationships we develop with patients and the bond we develop make it worth it. I always say we have to remember the 90 percent of our patients that make coming to work every day worth it. The long hours are challenging and wish there was a way to get away from that, but I would miss seeing my patients and talking about their lives [if I left medicine]."
Mary Christ, MD, a Farmington, Ct.-based executive consultant

"In my role as a healthcare informatics and technology executive, I have the opportunity to influence both medicine and technology. I am extremely excited about 2017 since with each passing year we make enormous strides in medicine via technology and, with the advent of cognitive computing, we move closer to providing personalized healthcare. For me, every day is a day to make a difference in improving lives."
Stephen H. Hanson, PA-C, a Bakersfield, Calif.-based plastic and reconstructive surgery physician assistant

"I still feel like the work that I do is a calling, and a 'pay back' for all the good that my profession has given me. I have been blessed. I get to serve my community's health care needs, work alongside of some of the best and brightest minds in medicine, and support my family. As I approach permanent retirement, I still love my job in 2017, and still get up each and every day raring to go. I love my job."
"Yes, I can still love being a physician in 2017. I have seen some changes over my nearly 24-year career as an internist, but the passion or love for the profession remains … The fun or creative aspect of medicine in 2017 is applying the great applications, tools, or technology to accentuate this passion. While burnout, feeling out of control or helpless, can have a numbing effect or stifle this passion, one of the advantages of being in a small office in 2017 is having the flexibility and ability to change quickly to the terrain of the field of medicine."