One of the MMA’s goals is for Minnesotans to be the healthiest people in the nation. According to the Commonwealth Fund, whose Health System Scorecard provides a regular assessment of health system performance, we are on track to meet that goal. The most recent scorecard ranked Minnesota first among all states in the nation.

This ranking is based on multiple measures including access to care, prevention and treatment of illness, avoidable hospital stays and the costs associated with them, and mortality and lifestyle factors.

Despite our overall high ranking, the data point to areas where we need to make significant improvements. We rank 27th in terms of adults who have a usual source of care (only 76 percent of adults in Minnesota identified a usual source of care; 89 percent reported a usual source of care in the state with the best ranking).

Minnesota also ranked 27th for children ages 19 to 35 months who received all recommended doses of seven key vaccines. Our rate was 71 percent; the state with the best ranking had a rate of 85 percent. Some of these differences reflect disparities in access related to geography and income and delivery system inequities.

So, despite the top overall ranking, there is still work to do. The MMA Board of Trustees recently approved a comprehensive set of recommendations from its Health Disparities Work Group to address gaps in access to and quality of care. Details on this work, led by Fatima Jiwa, MBChB, can be found on the MMA website (www.mnmed.org/about-us/committees-task-forces/health-disparities-task-force).

Along with our work on disparities, we are focusing our legislative efforts on improving vaccination rates. Last session, we made the elimination of conscientious objections to vaccines one of our top three priorities. Strategies for improving HPV vaccination rates are under review by the MMA Policy Council.

But comprehensive success also requires physician involvement at the local level. One of the best examples of local leadership is the work of the Stearns Benton Medical Society and Pat Zook, MD. Dr. Zook’s hard work to improve vaccination rates in the St. Cloud area was recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2015.

The resources of the MMA are available for all members to use in order to improve the health of Minnesotans one community at a time. Let us know about successful efforts in your communities!