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PROFILE: Lydia Vaias, MD '96 — A Triple Threat

For Lydia Vaias, MD '96, Santa Monica, Calif., medicine means unceasing advocacy on behalf of physicians and patients.

As a medical student at Temple in the 1990s, she organized a conference called “Physician Activism: The Call Beyond Call,” which drew 500 of her peers from across the region and featured such speakers as then-Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders and Patch Adams. It was a harbinger of things to come. She went on to serve as president of the School’s chapter of American Medical Student Association (AMSA) and after graduating from Temple, became president of AMSA at the national level.

While completing her general surgery residency at the University of California at Los Angeles, Dr. Vaias earned an MPH with a concentration in health policy. She then joined the staff of Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Bellflower, Calif., and was soon thereafter named to the board of the Permanente Medical Group, where she helps to oversee a \$5 billion business that includes 11 hospitals and 130 medical office buildings and pharmacies.

“Lydia Vaias is dynamic and boundless,” says her classmate Hoangmai (Mai) Pham, MD '95, MPH, adjunct assistant professor in the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins and senior health researcher at the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Studying Health System Change. She says that Dr. Vaias is making national waves as the founding leader and president of a new organization called the National Physicians Alliance (NPA) — an impressive group of 10,000 plus members poised to transform organized medicine by balancing the AMA’s traditional guild-focused agenda with an agenda to restore the core values of medicine: service, integrity, and advocacy.

A progressive physician-activist, Dr. Vaias is deeply committed to public health and patient-centered care. She attributes much

of her commitment to those who taught her. “A lot of it started with the mentoring I got when I was a student at Temple,” says Dr. Vaias. “The physicians there are 100 percent dedicated to the communities they serve. I’m extraordinarily grateful to my university.”

“Dr. Vaias is one of the most talented, dedicated physicians I have ever known,” says Dr. Pham, noting that what makes her especially impressive is that she was once a homeless street kid who has worked hard for everything she’s accomplished.

“Dr. Vaias is a ‘triple threat’,” says Dr. Pham. “A compassionate clinician, effective executive, and a respected community leader.”