John Z. Ayanian, M.D., MPP
Alice Hamilton Collegiate Professor of Medicine  
Professor of Internal Medicine

The academic research landscape is strewn with findings that have tremendous scientific merit but have not yet bridged the divide to make an impact on everyday life. It takes a special scholar to generate and help translate those findings to make them compelling for the media, policymakers and the public. John Z. Ayanian, M.D., MPP, has the distinctive ability not only to conduct high-impact health services research but also to make sure its results have an impact. For this, he is the recipient of the Clinical and Health Services Research Award.

When Michigan was recruiting a leader for its new Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation (IHPI) back in 2012, it turned to one of the country’s leading health services researchers. Ayanian has made seminal contributions in his research into racial and ethnic disparities; the impact of needing, and then gaining, insurance coverage; the quality of cardiovascular and cancer care, including the roles of generalist and specialist physicians treatments, the use of effective treatments, end-of-life care and patient experiences.

Ayanian is considered a national expert on health care reform and the expansion of the Michigan Medicaid program under the Affordable Care Act. His nominators for this award say he is a respected voice on the essential elements of the program, and he has led the design and implementation of a complex evaluation of Medicaid expansion that is based at IHPI and involves 17 faculty members from five different U-M schools.

“Dr. Ayanian understands that high-quality research is only part of a successful equation for impact; compelling communication is a must-have in today’s media-complex world,” says Matthew M. Davis, M.D., MAPP, former deputy director of IHPI who is now on the faculty at Northwestern University and the Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital in Chicago. “He also is responsive to the brainstorming and project proposals of the IHPI faculty who want to push beyond the boundaries of knowledge themselves.”

For his research contributions, Ayanian has been elected to the American Society for Clinical Investigation (2003), the Association of American Physicians (2009) and the National Academy of Medicine (2010). He also has received numerous prestigious awards, including the John M. Eisenberg National Award for Career Achievement in Research — the highest award for research achievement given by the Society for General Internal Medicine.

Now, he leads an institute of nearly 500 faculty members from 17 colleges, schools and institutes dedicated to evaluating how health care works and how it can be improved, and advising policymakers to inform change. In his roles as director and researcher, he is an ambassador for health services research across the Michigan campus, and in Lansing and Washington, D.C.

"Dr. Ayanian is a rare scholar in that he is able to further translate research findings into relevant policy recommendations and initiatives."
— Paul P. Lee, M.D., J.D., F. Bruce Fralick Professor and chair, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences