

AMWA NEWS

2022 Walter C. Alvarez Award Recipient: Dr Leana Wen

Kimberly Korwek, PhD / Chair, Annual Conference Program Committee

The **Walter C. Alvarez Award** is named in honor of Walter C. Alvarez, MD, a pioneer in the field of medical communication. The award is presented to either a member or non-member of AMWA to honor excellence in communicating health care developments and concepts to the public. The Alvarez Award is presented during AMWA's Medical Writing & Communication Conference.

The 2022 Walter C. Alvarez Award is presented to Dr Leana Wen in honor of her many contributions in health communication, including regular columns in the Washington Post, the patient advocacy book *When Doctors Don't Listen: How to Avoid Misdiagnoses and Unnecessary Tests*, and the memoir of her career in public health, *Lifelines: A Doctor's Journey in the Fight for Public Health*. She has also authored dozens of articles in scientific publications including *Health Affairs*, *Lancet*, *PLoS Medicine*, and the *American Journal of Public Health*.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr Wen served as a CNN medical analyst and anchored a new Washington Post newsletter "The Checkup with Dr Wen" to provide help on navigating this and other public health challenges. As a consistent voice for using scientific evidence to guide policy decisions, these columns have aided many in understanding the numerous changes to guidelines and requirements. She brought this expertise to Congress in June 2020, testifying in front of the in front of the US House of Representatives Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis on racial disparities and COVID-19.

Dr Wen's career has focused on public health as a fundamental force in our individual lives and well-being. Previously, she served as Baltimore's Health Commissioner, where she led the nation's oldest continuously operating health department in the United States to fight the opioid epidemic, treat violence and racism as public health issues, and improve maternal and child health. She directed the public health recovery efforts of Baltimore after the 2015

riots, working to ensure access to prescription medication after pharmacy closures and working to develop the city's mental health and trauma recovery plan with crisis counseling, youth health and wellness, and violence prevention programs. As she states in *Lifelines*, "Public health saved your life today—you just don't know it."



As an expert on patient advocacy and patient-centered care, Dr Wen has long encouraged transparency in medicine. She began this work during in medical school, serving as the national president of the American Medical Student Association and leading campaigns to decrease health disparities and combat conflicts of interest between physicians and pharmaceutical companies. She has campaigned for voluntary disclosure of such conflicts of interest, and her TED talk on this topic has been viewed over 2 million times.

Dr Wen obtained her medical degree from Washington University School of Medicine and studied health policy at the University of Oxford, where she was a Rhodes Scholar. She completed her residency training at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital, where she was a clinical fellow at Harvard Medical School.

Dr Wen currently works as an emergency physician, professor of health policy and management at George Washington University, and a nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. She lives with her husband and their 2 young children in Baltimore.