

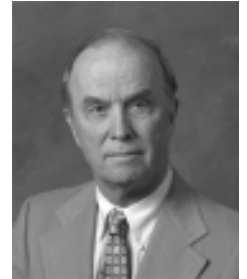


President's Comment

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President

El Paso County Medical Society



BALANCE BILLING

Where does the responsibility fall?

That is the problem facing the Texas Legislature in regards to balance billing. Does the burden fall on the patient who has had to go outside of his insurance network or should it fall on the insurance company or the physician involved? This has been a long-standing issue that has been left unsettled by the Texas legislature.

Part of the problem is when the patient is admitted to a hospital whose pathology or radiology departments are not participants in the patient's healthcare plan. The patient during his stay may have to utilize the services of the pathology and or radiology department. If these groups are not participants in the patient's insurance plan, the patient faces out of network reimbursement problems. Insurance companies traditionally have lowered payments or instituted non-payments to out of network physicians. This leaves the patient liable to the cost sustained.

The insurance companies contend that the pathology or radiology group involved has a monopoly because of contractual agreement with the hospital and thus can increase leverage in dealing with insurance companies. The physicians, on the other hand, state that the insurance companies have assumed a nonnegotiable cavalier attitude about their contracts with physicians (take it or leave it) and as a consequence have not reached an agreement with the physicians involved.

The Texas legislature had taken one-step in September 2007 when they enacted SB 1731, which mandated insurance companies have to inform patients that a particular in-hospital physician(s) may not be on their plan and would require out of network payment leaving the patient responsible for the balance. This requirement was also applied to physicians who are not part of that particular plan to inform the patient of their out of network situation. Additionally the law empowered the department of insurance to study reimbursement practices and their applications.

Legislators have encouraged physicians to enroll in insurance plans with the inducement or reasonable reimbursement. At the present time, this remains a pipe dream. The insurance companies and physicians need to be brought to the table to resolve the problem once and for all. Otherwise, it will be left up to the politicians to decide where the financial responsibility falls.

David O. Taber, M.D.
President, El Paso County Medical Society

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM GORDON MCGEE, M.D.

Dr. McGee recently passed away and left a long history of accomplishments personal as well as medical devoting many hours to the County Medical Society and the Texas Medical Association and the American Medical Association. He began his education at the University of Texas at Austin, then went on to Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, graduating in 1958. His internship training as well as his residency in internal medicine from 1958-1961 was done at Parkland Hospital in Dallas, Texas. This was followed by a residency in pathology from 1961-1965. During his training he served as an instructor in pathology. Dr. McGee then subsequently served in the United States Army from 1967-1969, resigning at rank of Lt. Colonel.

He was a member of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, College of American Pathologist, International Academy of Pathology, American Medical Association, Texas Society of Pathology, Texas Medical Association, El Paso County Medical Society, Southern Association of Blood Banks, Texas Society of Cytology, Texas Medical Foundation, TEXPAC "300" Club, TEXPAC/AMPAC, and the Trans-Pecos Medical Foundation.

He served as President of the El Paso County Medical Society in 1979. He was on the Action Committee (AMPAC) with the American Medical Association, President of the Texas Medical Foundation from 1979-1985, President of the Texas Society of Pathologist in 1980, Member of the House of Delegates with the College of American Pathologists in 1977 up to 2008. His greatest accomplishment was when he was elected President of the Texas Medical Association from 1990-1991. He later served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees from 1986 to 2008. He was an alternate delegate to the AMA from 1988 to 2008. Other achievements include Vice Chairman of the Board of Regents for Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center 1988 to 2008, Secretary to the Texas Medical Board and served on the Legislative Task Force on Cancer in Texas in 1984. He was also President of the West Texas Council of Governments, Health Systems Agency from 1976-1981, Chairman of the El Paso City-County Board of Health 1977-1978, and was Chairman of the Emergency Medical Services System of El Paso from 1978-1981.

Dr. McGee had proven to be an icon in the medical community of El Paso and the state of Texas. He had served his community well by his unending devotion to improving the health and welfare of our citizens. We will recall his humor, candor, honesty, perspicacity as well as his humble demeanor. His family, friends and colleagues in medicine will sorely miss him. There, presently is a movement afoot to get the Mayor of El Paso to honor him by naming a street, park or public institution in Dr. McGee's memory. I feel that this would be a fitting and lasting memorial to this outstanding man.