

PC

PRESIDENT'S COMMENT

E. P. C. M. S.

I used to think that medicine had nothing to do with politics. Boy was I wrong. Liberals argue that the efficiency we lack in the Health Care system could be achieved by putting as much as possible of the health care sector into one "Big system". Within this system various irregularities could be managed out of existence by the mandated regulations. The problem now, they say, is that health care is too convoluted and only answers to the needs of the insurance companies. If it were made more orderly and answered to the needs of the public costs could be controlled more effectively. I do not think so.

Conservatives argue that the efficiency we lack would be achieved by allowing price capitations to control the actions of both providers and consumers, thus creating more savings. We could then hope to allow more competition and informed consumer choices that would apply pressure eventually creating lower prices. The problem now, is that third-party insurers keep health care cost hidden from the actual charges to actual payments making efficiency impossible. If it were made more transparent and answered to the wishes of consumers, prices could be controlled more effectively.

Everyone has a different view and opinion as to what health care needs to look like, but the reality is that the Health Care Reform is here and it is here to stay.

I would like to thank everyone that attended The 5th Annual Border Health Conference in Washington, DC. I truly believe it was a huge success. For those of you that continue to think that lobbying doesn't make a difference, the House passed the last extension two days after the doctors from the Border Health Caucus pounded on every door of every Texas Congressional Delegation. The Senators and Congressman were very receptive to our visit and we continued to educate them with our collected statistics and data. Fact: physicians cannot continue to absorb the cuts in Medicare fees and maintain viable practices. For the past decade, the cost of running a practice has increased almost 28% and during this same period, physician payments from Medicare have remained stagnant. This continued uncertainty is forcing some physicians to make difficult decision to either opt out of Medicare, limit the number of patients they treat, or retire early. To compound matters, the current payment system ensures hospitals, nursing homes, pharmaceutical companies, Medicare HMO's and many other Medicare providers to receive an automatic cost of living increase. Meanwhile, every year doctors, the ones in the trenches, who take care

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of the sick and injured Medicare patients-have to juggle patient loads in order to maintain their practices. It is the final straw for many of our colleagues.

After our lobbying on the second day of our conference we were able to discuss the different issues affecting the Border States. We were honored to have a presentation from Dr. Jaime Flores-Neder from the Juarez Mexico Society included in the conference. The border region poses particular challenges to the U.S. health care system: It is one of the fastest-growing populations in the nation. Along with its growth, the region also is experiencing a rapid increase in chronic disease and healthcare expense. While obesity rates across the country are alarming, along the border the problem is even more acute with nearly 30 percent of our border adults obese. Obesity is related to diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension. These occurrences of these diseases are increasing exponentially. Also the prevalence of TB in this region is more than two times higher than the rest of Texas, and more than any other part of the United States 12.7 cases per 100,000. With the dense populations along the border, and a continuous high volume of border crossings, communicable diseases are just a footstep away.

Dr. Manuel Acosta once again did an incredible job putting the conference together with the assistance of Jake Fuller, Darren Whitehurst, Pam Udall, Dan Finch, David Wilhelm, Dolores Camacho-Phillips, and Patsy Slaughter. They did a great job getting us there, preparing us on the issues and fighting our fight. I would also like to give special thanks to the office of Congressman Silvestre Reyes and his staffers Alejandra Sifuentes, Sigrid Gonzalez, who so graciously hosted the conference. I am hoping more of you will attend next year and assist with our causes.

Thank you, for all your support and I challenge each and every one of you to get involved in some form or fashion. This is our legacy and our livelihood.

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5th Annual Border Health Conference Washington, DC

