

As outgoing chairman of MCMS, I want to send a message to each of you. We are in unprecedented times in health care, with physician burnout at an all-time high and an estimated 400 physician suicides occurring each year. Physicians have never been so disrespected. Nurse practitioners promote the idea that our training is superfluous and that they are interchangeable with physicians despite having had about 5- 10 % as much training. Certifying boards challenge our integrity, by dictating that we place our belongings into a locker prior to taking recertification exams, tests that they promote as measurements of our qualifications to practice. Middlemen interfere with our ability to care for patients. We are forced to ask insurance companies for their approval before our recommendations to patients can be honored. I did a recent peer to peer to get approval of a medicine for one of my patients. My peer was a pharmacist, with no training in my specialty. We are labeled as “providers” rather than physicians. EHR’s have made us glorified data entry operators forced to comply with government and insurance mandates. These are only a few examples of the issues that affect us and our ability to practice.

Physicians complain bitterly about these issues to each other. We also complain that organized medicine is not doing enough to protect us. So the question, I pose to each of you is: what have you done to help protect our profession? When PAMED put out a call to action on the venue issue, did you respond? Only 3% of email recipients can say yes. Have you spoken to your legislators about the scope of practice issue? Have you written an op-ed or letter to the editor of your local newspaper about prior auth or surprise billing and how your patients are affected? Have you taken any time outside the exam room to help our profession? If nothing else, have you at least made a monetary contribution to PAMPAC to help support legislators who support the House of Medicine?

For as much as we complain about how things are, if we do nothing to combat these issues that threaten our livelihood and more importantly our patients, our silence makes us complicit.

I make an impassioned plea to all of you. Please get involved in some fashion, any fashion. Help us in this battle to protect our profession from those who seek to control the health care dollar for their own purposes. Fight for your patients. Fight for your colleagues. Take action when PAMED asks you to do so on a critical issue, speak to your legislator, write to your newspaper. Even if you do not have the time or the inclination to do any of these, at least make a generous donation to PAMPAC so that others can fight on your behalf. Go to www.pamedsoc.org and click on “contact us” to learn how you can get involved.

I think medicine is a noble and wonderful profession. It is being destroyed. I urge each of you to help protect it any way you can. If we do not fight to protect our profession, who will? The time is now!

Thank you,

Mark Lopatin