

Why Doctors Are Afraid of Healthcare Reform

Doctors are afraid of healthcare reform hurting their practices so badly that many feel they may be forced to quit medicine.

According to David Mitchel, a marketing consultant for healthcare companies, doctors are already being hammered by lower fees from managed care companies and rising malpractice insurance premiums. Healthcare reform may shrink those revenues even further, while doing nothing to reduce malpractice insurance rates.

"Doctors are outright scared," said Mitchel, VP of Norton Mitchel Marketing (www.nortonmitchel.com). "Since the dawn of managed care, they haven't really caught a break. The costs of operating their practices have done nothing but rise over the last two decades, while their potential revenues continue to drop because managed care companies keep slashing what they pay doctors."

Mitchel said doctors have five basic issues with healthcare reform:

• Government Involvement - The vast majority of physicians oppose government involvement in their businesses. They are not pleased with VA, Medicare/Medicaid, as these patients do not optimize revenue and profits for practices. Practitioners need private insurance patients to offset costs of treating these patients. Further government involvement would dissuade more doctors from practicing.

• Quality of Care - Many physicians are considering quitting or retiring if the proposed health care reform becomes law. This is especially true amongst practitioners aged between 55 and 65. This age group of physicians makes up some of the best physicians. Retiring two to five years ahead of schedule seems like a preferable option as compared to working under a new order. With fewer doctors available and more demand for medical services, quality of care will drop.

• Costs - Medical school is an expensive proposition. Schooling for specialists particularly is so expensive that they are fearful that if they charge what the government will pay, they will never recoup school expenses. Under the best of circumstances, doctors are saddled with huge debts for at least the first 10-15 years of their careers.

• Malpractice - The health care reform bill does nothing to address one of the biggest complaints of doctors: the cost of malpractice insurance. The cost of malpractice insurance is rising rapidly, driving up healthcare costs, and discouraging new doctors from entering the field.

• Taxes - Doctors are taxpayers, just like everyone else. Most are skeptical that this bill will produce cost savings. They see a world of higher medical costs and poorer health outcomes. They do not want the additional tax burden of paying for a system that won't be beneficial. Higher taxes also hamper their ability to make a living.

"As Americans continue to age and live longer because of medical science, we cannot afford to lose skilled physicians while at the same time reducing the pool of new physicians entering the field," Mitchel said. "Unless healthcare reform can address these issues, it may just be a recipe for disaster."

About the Author

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