

In the Driver's Seat

As we begin a new year, we are as never before in a unique position as physicians to rise up to the challenges of our profession – to take care of the sick. We tend to get bogged down by the everyday flurry of our active lives to keep ahead of the ever changing scientific advances in medicine and the ever changing business venues that occur daily. Never a day goes by when there isn't a new medicine code or an insurance change for reimbursements.

Our state is in a physician crisis. There are 207 physicians for every 100,000 residents in Arizona. The national average is 283 per 100,000 population. As a practitioner, this should be quite an empowerment for we are in the driver's seat. We should take that fact and use it "individually" to help our patients. We all have to say, "NO" -- "No" to bad reimbursement whether from insurance companies, HMO's or federal and state programs. Say "No" to being treated poorly and "No" to Government cuts. Write your congressmen that we can't tolerate Medicare cuts. They get a 4% automatic raise every year. We have to meet our cost of living and the rising costs of the practice. Never in the course of history have we had so much power. "No" is a mighty word. The key is to have the guts to say the little two-letter word – NO!

What I see that has happened to us as a profession; we have lost our vision and light. We are fighting among ourselves like barnyard dogs; opening our mouths behind other physician's backs, uttering hurtful words that will be used in court against one of our own someday. We are a team that went into this field to help the sick. We had a calling. We are a team and team members help each other. Why? Because we are on a mission of healing. All who come to us call us Doctors, Healers. If we envision ourselves as one team and treat each other with respect, what a powerhouse we will become. We could proudly hold our heads high. We really are in control and proud of it and free to help the needy, sick and hurting of Arizona.

Welcome to the New Year, teammates.

Barbara A. Berry, M.D.
President