

Now Work With It!

The problems of primary medical care providers continue to make conversation in the doctors' lounges locally and around the country. The February 20th issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine* reports the unfortunate figures relating to reimbursement for primary care codes. The report indicates that Medicare increased reimbursement for primary medical care by 12% over the 10 year period from 1995 to 2005. This figure is significant enough to drive physicians away from the primary care fields. Other figures for specialties were reported also and the relative failure of appropriate adjustments for primary care codes and dramatic increases for other specialties must be addressed.

Recently the budget for the next fiscal year nationally suggests that all the medical education funds should be taken from the Medicaid budget. Unfortunately, this may cut the University of Arizona Medical School's funding by approximately two thirds.

These facts make it clear that medicine is in the "cross hairs" of Republican and Democrat policy makers. Unfortunately, I do not feel we have the ear of even our local representatives. The local fight is centered on the hope that the "Burden of Proof" legislation will make it to the Governor this year. Rumor has it that Governor Napolitano has suggested she does not want to see the bill get to her desk. The Governor's own independent committee suggested that she should have signed the bill last year. Later this session, we will need everyone's help with encouraging the Governor to sign the bill that her friends in the trial lawyers association have denounced.

Nationally and locally, we must become more vocal. Last month, I asked for your participation to identify one or two points in your practice that are restricting and/or costly to the practice of medicine. More importantly, give us your recommendations on how to correct the problem.

Recently, I had the opportunity to discuss some of the problems with Congressman Mitchell. He was very receptive but acknowledged the lack of understanding of the complex problem that medicine presents. We must educate our representatives. If we don't the trial lawyers, insurance industry and social activist will. We are embroiled in a battle and we are not preparing well for the fight. Please join with your colleagues and expand our numbers. Join in the communications and help us educate our representatives, our friends and our patients.

We have asked for your email addresses and the response has been strong. With just the first request we have increased the number of email addresses from 10% to 30%. I hope to see these numbers rise and see the membership participate. Send a message to us at MCMS@medical-society.com. Again, the Society will not give your address to any other organization. We will confirm your address with the Society's new newsletter, *InforMed Society*, which will provide information on key issues in the future. This is your Society, now work with it!! We are looking for your participation!

Jud Tillinghast, M.D.
President