

## **Abstract to the Particular Equals Panic**

The last thing I needed was another full time job! Trying to keep up with legislation, discussion, opinions and viewpoints on health care is more than a full time job, it is impossible. In this column I have asked everyone to stay informed, sorry, I did not realize how difficult that would be. Case in point, take a look at the 1,017 page HR 3200 bill. I downloaded it, started reading it, and now am desperately looking for the Cliff Notes version. The problem of course is we do not know if this even will resemble what finally makes its way through the legislative process. While doing this we are bombarded with talking points from all the special interest groups and the political extremes.

The preponderance of discussion seems to be directed at the financing piece. Who has insurance, who is mandated to have insurance or coverage, should there be a “public option”. There is much less discussion how we are going to more efficiently deliver care. Yes there is the commitment to EMR development; this is only part of the much larger issue of improving efficiency. EMR is only a tool; we need to figure out how to use that tool and other tools to better deliver care. Energy and resources need to be committed to encourage redesigning the care model. There is occasional reference to the primary care shortage; once again, there is very little concrete information as to how this will be remedied.

I was encouraged to hear President Obama make at least a passing reference to tort reform. As I stated in a previous article, the issue of defensive medicine is one that is obvious to all of us but there seems to be lack of data to support our premise. I am less than sure that anything substantial will come from this.

The American College of Physicians has published an excellent White Paper on Controlling Health Care Costs While Promoting the Best Possible Health Outcomes. You can download this at [http://www.acponline.org/advocacy/where\\_we\\_stand/policy/controlling\\_healthcare\\_costs.pdf](http://www.acponline.org/advocacy/where_we_stand/policy/controlling_healthcare_costs.pdf) or at the Medical Society's website at <http://www.mcmsonline.com/index/news/advocacy>.

This is a comprehensive look at health care expenditures, referenced and supported by studies with 47 specific recommendations. It covers promotion and dissemination of evidence based medicine, Comparative Effectiveness Research, EMR usage, paying physicians for additional time for patient shared decision making. There is promotion of local planning for health care resources, additional studies of certificate of need programs. It advocates promotion of pilots for delivery of care and accelerating adoption of Patient Centered Medical Care Models. The article addresses pharmaceutical costs and government purchasing power to get the best cost for pharmaceuticals. It appropriately addresses primary care physician shortage and reducing administrative paperwork. Tort reform is promoted as well as Wellness programs. This is the best comprehensive summary and solution paper that I have seen.

The whole process is very interesting from a social perspective. Michael Kinsley in the *Washington Post* summarizes this very well. “The reason Americans have turned against health-care reform, after electing president Obama in part for promising it, is simple: Despite protestations to the contrary, Americans don't like change. ... as soon as it seems that change might actually happen—as soon as we leave the abstract for the particular – we panic. We suddenly develop nostalgia for the comforts of the status quo. Sure, we want change – as long as everything can stay just as it is.”

While writing this article, my 2 ½ year old granddaughter is touching my heart, joyfully singing along with a music video. I cannot help but wonder what the health care system will be like for her in 10 years, 20 years and beyond. I personally believe that change can be beneficial and presents new opportunities. I am also generally an optimist, I believe that things can and will get better. Keep singing Emberly...

**Brian R. Riveland, M.D.**

**President**

*“Personality can open doors, but only character can keep them open” Elmer G. Letterman  
quoted in [TheBookreporter.com](http://TheBookreporter.com)*

No PHOTO this month.