



MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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NYS Medical Society Supports Efforts to Codify Attorney General Andrew Cuomo's Physician Ranking Model

LAKE SUCCESS, NY (11/26/2007) – Robert B. Goldberg, DO, President of the Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY), issued the following statement in support of legislative efforts to codify the Physician Ranking Model Code (the "Model Code") that Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo developed for health insurers.

"After a six-month investigation, Attorney General Andrew Cuomo has made impressive strides in making doctor ranking programs accurate, reliable and accountable by convincing New York State's major insurers to adopt his national Physician Ranking Model Code. Over the past three weeks, he has announced doctor ranking agreements with five major insurers: CIGNA Healthcare, Aetna, Empire BlueCross Blue Shield, UnitedHealthcare, and Group Health Incorporated (GHI) and Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York (HIP). The nation's three largest health insurers – Wellpoint (Empire's parent), UnitedHealthcare and Aetna – have announced that they will voluntarily also apply the principles of the Model Code nationwide, thus making the Model Code a truly national one.

The Model Code was created by the Attorney General in consultation with our leaders at the Medical Society of the State of New York (MSSNY), as well as with the American Medical Association, and numerous consumer advocacy groups including the Consumers Union, the National Partnership for Women & Families, and the Consumer Purchaser Disclosure Project. Thus, all industry stakeholders have been a part of the process.

MSSNY supports the concept of enacting legislation to codify the Model Code because we believe it protects the interests of both our physician members, who practice medicine in all specialties throughout the state, and our New York patients, who would benefit most from the proposed legislation. Such legislation would also better ensure that any ranking of physicians would be based on verifiable measures of clinical skill, instead of on how much money they saved the insurer.

We support the idea of codifying the Model Code with legislation because it is based on the core principles of transparency and accuracy of information and oversight of the process. Legislation would seek to ensure that patients are provided with clear and comprehensive information about doctors and that any rankings accurately reflect the quality of health care provided by doctors, and that the health insurance plan will need to collect and analyze clinical data before rankings can be released. We believe this would better enable patients to judge the competency of physicians on the quality of medical care – instead of on the cost of medical care. What is also particularly important is the Attorney General's inclusion of a continual oversight initiative that would assure the integrity and effectiveness of the program.

The Model Code ensures that data provided to patients are accurate and that doctors are evaluated fairly because it is based on a balanced process. It fairly balances the interests and concerns of consumers, the medical community and insurers. We applaud the Attorney General for his actions in getting individual NYS insurers to adopt this code and look forward to working with him now to enact these principles into NYS law."