

Medical Society of the State of New York

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Editor, Letters to the Editor
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New York, NY 10018

MSSNY Responds to NY Times Editorial re Lagging US Health Care

The Medical Society of the State of New York shares the concerns about our healthcare system that were expressed in Thursday's (11/1/2007) editorial, "America's Lagging Health Care System." We do need to improve access to quality medical care for all Americans, and we particularly need to increase access to primary care doctors, our medical gate keepers, who oversee our overall health care. This requires a number of changes.

Because astronomical education debt forces many medical students to specialize, the medical payment structures need to be changed so that bright medical students can afford to select primary care as their field. This will improve access, reduce scheduling delays, improve quality of care and allow for more efficient medical practices. We also need to make medical schools more accessible and affordable to more diverse population groups.

Additional ways to improve quality and efficiency include developing and funding a national standard for digitalized and transportable patient records; mandatory – but legally protected – reporting of all medical errors to foster continuous learning and quality improvement; and requiring all professionals, including lawyers, to do a better job of weeding out incompetent colleagues.

To reduce the need for medical care in the first place, healthcare dollars now wasted on excessive insurance company profits and legal fees should be redirected to patient education on preventive care and lifestyle changes.

To avoid fragmentation, these changes must be made simultaneously.

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