



NORTH CAROLINA'S SOURCE FOR IMPORTANT PHYSICIAN INFORMATION

Mayor Charles Boyette, MD Country Doctor of the Year

Dr. Boyette, a long-time physician and mayor of Belhaven, North Carolina, recently received national recognition when he was named Country Doctor of the Year. The annual award, sponsored by Staff Care, Inc., a Texas-based business that provides temporary physician services, recognized him for years of service to his community of 2,000.

Dr. Boyette has practiced in Belhaven for 39 years and been mayor for 30 years. His practice, which is approximately 140 miles east of Raleigh, has 19,000 active patients. He is on staff at the local hospital, speaks to the Beaufort County Board of Commissioners and regularly presides over town council meetings. He's basically on call 24/7.

Dr. Boyette's prize for winning the Country Doctor of the Year award is a temporary physician for a week. ●

Tort Reform Update

Dr. Sandy Easley, an OB/GYN and attorney in Washington, NC, recently spoke before the NC House Blue Ribbon Task Force on medical malpractice. His remarks focused on making the legislature aware of the increasing lack of patient access to quality care and the impact of increasing medical malpractice premiums for OB/GYNs across the state.

Dr. Easley pointed out two major concerns associated with medical malpractice premiums that have more than doubled in the past four years: 1) most managed care plans, Medicare and Medicaid have reduced their reimbursement levels which are now commonly lower than the physicians' actual expense; and 2) Managed Care Plans, Medicare and Medicaid prohibit a physician from passing the increases on to their patients.

Left no other recourse, increasing numbers of OB/GYNs are no longer doing OB or undertaking high-risk procedures. Many are opting to simply retire altogether. Dr. Easley urged the Task Force to take decisive action before access to affordable quality obstetrical healthcare is further compromised. ●

Risk Management Tips

JCAHO Wrong-Site Protocol: A Standard of Care

Despite all the warnings about wrong-site, wrong-person and wrong-procedure surgery, the problem persists. According to the Institute of Medicine, more than 50,000 patients have filed lawsuits in the past five years for "wrong-site surgery." Operating on the wrong site or body part represents a potentially devastating event for all parties involved, often attracting considerable media attention and leading to malpractice lawsuits. Common factors identified in wrong-site surgery include:

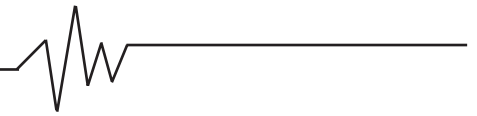
- Involvement of multiple surgeons on a case
- Performance of multiple procedures during a single trip to the operating room
- Unusual time constraints and unusual anatomy or patient characteristics, such as physical deformity or morbid obesity

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) recently approved the Universal Protocol for preventing wrong-site, wrong-procedure and wrong-person surgery, required by all accredited organizations that provide surgical services beginning July 1, 2004. Although the advice outlined in the Universal Protocol is not groundbreaking, it now carries the approval of JCAHO along with that of several other prominent organizations. Healthcare providers now have a consistent procedure to follow to achieve a higher level of care.

The Universal Protocol draws on and expands a series of existing requirements under the 2003 and 2004 National Patient Safety Goals. It will be applicable to all operative and other invasive procedures. The principal components of this Universal Protocol include:

- Preoperative verification process
- Marking the operative site
- Taking a time out immediately before starting the procedure
- Adaptation of the requirements to non-operating room settings, including bedside procedures

The prudent physician will act quickly to implement the Universal Protocol in his/her practice and healthcare organization. For more information, please call a MAG Mutual Risk Management consultant at 800-282-4882. ●



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In the News

Insurers to receive 10.6% increase from Medicare... President Bush recently announced that, effective March 1, Medicare payments to health maintenance organizations and other private health plans will increase by a record 10.6 percent.

Tommy G. Thompson, the secretary of health and human services, described the increased payments as "an investment in our seniors." As a result of the increase, Medicare beneficiaries will have more options and better services since more organizations should now serve the Medicare market and the elderly.

Now is the Time to Refinance Your Home Loan

MAG Mutual has a new home loan program for physicians that offers substantial savings on closing costs—along with competitive interest rates. Whether you are purchasing a new home or refinancing your current one, the program is open to all of our medical professional liability policyholders.

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