

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

In response to Christopher T. Miller, who claims to be a first year medical student at Thomas Jefferson University Medical College in Philadelphia, who blames Medicare problems on lawsuits, I respectfully suggest that you learn something about “evidence-based medicine” in your travels. A member of your well-known institution is also a member of Pennsylvania’s Patient Safety Authority to whom over 150,000 incidents and serious events have been reported in connection with medical care in this Commonwealth in one year. During that same time, about 1% of those people ever filed a lawsuit!

Even more shocking than that statistic is information published in medical journals that 54% of physicians do not follow usual and customary practice standards in their care and treatment of patients. It is no wonder that Health Grades reports that preventable medical errors are the single largest reason for our bloated health care bill in this country.

One thing that is gratifying is that the medical community now seems to recognize the wisdom and truth of the Institute of Medicine study in 1999 which found the number of preventable medical errors in this country entirely unacceptable. When the medical industry teaches its young medical students like Mr. Miller that patient safety must come before profits, expediency and arrogance, we will then see a decrease in the cost of medical care. As Dr. Finestein from Pittsburgh recently told the Patient Safety Authority, “nurses function in dysfunction” and “it’s not all about the doctor’s genius.”

We will get a better litigation system when we make patient safety a priority.

CAR/srb

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