



Massage Today

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Hey, Doctor Wanna-Be's

By Ralph Stephens, BS, LMT, NCTMB

Want to be just like doctors? Here's your chance! At least once a week, I get something in the mail urging me to sign up in a managed care network. One network went so far as to threaten me by giving me a deadline that I had to have its forms completed and filed so it could meet some regulation.

These are usually followed by phone calls: "Mr.

Stephens, did you get our application form in the mail?" The incredible opportunity offered to me is: 1) to do more paperwork, and 2) to charge patients less money who belong to the network's "group." My response to these offers is to send back their postage-paid envelopes empty. I do not believe in discrimination -- for example, charging one rate for purple people and another rate for green people. People in an insurance group are "purples"; they get the good rate. People not in the insurance group are the "greens"; they pay extra.

I can justify rate adjustments based on real need. However, these approved-provider, managed-care and insurance discounts are not based on needs. In reality, the affluent belong to the plans and the poor do not. Why give the rich a better deal? Participation in the discrimination created by these plans is immoral and unethical.

This unethical behavior ultimately comes home to roost in lower moral and job satisfaction, as documented by a recent study by the Kaiser Family Foundation. Doctors have been involved in these unethical schemes far longer than massage therapists have. Here's what we have to look forward to as we become more and more entangled in the allopathic insurance web. We will be just like doctors in this way. Won't that be great?

Physicians Report Declining Morale, Cite Dissatisfaction with Managed Care

Ninety percent of physicians who participated in the Kaiser study said that the overall morale of their colleagues has decreased in the last five years. A smaller percentage, although still a majority (58 percent), said that their own enthusiasm for practicing medicine has lessened during that time. Among the factors cited for the decline in morale are the number of work hours physicians spend on administrative activities; the lack of professional autonomy; their potential income over the next five years; and the amount of time they have for nonprofessional interests, family and friends.

The survey also indicated that managed care is a major source of doctors' woes. Three-quarters of the physicians surveyed said that managed care has had a negative impact on the way they practice medicine. Specifically, 95 percent said that managed care has increased their paperwork, and 88 percent said it has decreased the amount of time they can spend with patients. Although the physicians surveyed did credit managed care with increasing the use of practice guidelines and disease management protocols (these are currently being developed for massage... sigh), 73 percent said that managed care has decreased health care quality overall.

For more results from this survey, go to: www.kff.org/content/2002/20020426c/.

So, doctors are getting bummed out having to do all the paperwork, being told what they can do and how much of it they can do, and having to work more and more for less and less. See what happens when you let insurance companies and the government get between you and your patients? You lose. Ultimately, so do the patients. Third-party reimbursement (insurance) is like a drug to both the patient and the practitioner. The best response to the temptation is to "Just Say No!"

Unfinished Business

For those of you who care about health freedom, which should be all of you, it is time for an update on the Model State Emergency Health Powers Act (MSEHPA). I mentioned this act earlier in the year. This sinister legislation was developed by power-hungry public health bureaucrats and is being pushed onto every state. These opportunists have been planning this for a long time and are using the current crisis/panic state of people to fulfill their dream of complete state control over your health. After all, they believe they know what is best for you. MSEHPA will severely infringe on citizens' medical privacy and freedom to choose their health care. If you believe in mandatory vaccination, this bill is for you. If you like martial law, ruled by public health officials, you will love this bill. If you believe in freedom of choice in health care, this bill will be terrifying to you. Are you in a licensed state? If this bill passes in your state, you and all

health-care facilities, doctors, and health-care providers will have to agree to abide by the MSEHPA during declared public-health emergencies to maintain licenses to practice or run a health-care business. This means you!

This bill will, by careful design, greatly diminish Americans' health freedoms -- including the freedom of doctors and other health care providers. Under the MSEHPA, doctors could be required to administer treatments to which they object. This legislation clearly would infringe on doctors' and other health care providers' freedom of conscience. Moreover, the draft legislation does not state clearly that it will uphold existing state laws that provide for exemptions to vaccination. However, it does state that individuals who refuse medical examination and treatment (including vaccination) could be quarantined or isolated. For the sake of your patients and your practice, you had better get out and work against this bill. In states that have already enacted this legislation (Maryland, New Mexico, South Dakota and Utah), it is too late for you. In states that have introduced MSEHPA (Arizona; California; Delaware; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Illinois; Kansas; Kentucky; Maine; Massachusetts; Minnesota; Mississippi; Missouri; Nebraska; Nevada; New Hampshire; New York; Oklahoma; Pennsylvania; Rhode Island; Tennessee; Vermont; and Virginia) - you folks better get to work! You still have a chance to save yourselves.

This legislation won't make any headlines. You will never know it passed, until one day they pull it out and stick it to you. MSEHPA is inactive or has been defeated in Idaho, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Congratulations -- you saved yourselves! Stay alert, they will bring it back again if more states pass it.

To keep updated on this bill, visit www.ForHealthFreedom.org and/or www.alec.org.

Your responses to my columns on massage education have been immense and positive. Hopefully, many of you are organizing to enact improvements in your state. Next month, I will present a vision of massage education. Stand by for "Beyond the Rub."

Hope you have had wonderful summer. Have a great Labor Day.

Click [here](#) for more information about Ralph Stephens, BS, LMT, NCTMB.



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