



THE ACADEMY OF MEDICINE
CLEVELAND



Northern Ohio Medical Association

September 13, 2006

Letter to the Editor
Crain's Cleveland

Dear Editor:

Your recent article entitled "Docs find relief at last" quoted state organizations – including one from the state medical association, making a case that medical liability rates have stabilized to the extent that Ohio is now a better place to practice medicine.

Clearly, the quotes provided in the article by Dr. Bastulli, the AMC/NOMA representative, more accurately reflect the reality of practicing medicine in the Northern Ohio region. Physicians in *our* region continue to lose ground in the struggle to pay medical liability rates. We continue to hear from *our* members that medical liability is still their number one expense and their number one practice issue.

One of the statements made in your article by a state medical association representative intimated that although rates "are still very expensive, ...physicians have to find ways to not only keep up with that expense, but the economics of their practice." For the AMC/NOMA and *our* physicians, rates are the driver of the economics of the practice of medicine. With medical liability rates peaking at a level that constitutes a good portion of their practice overhead, there is no room left to alter "the economics of their practice." Physicians cannot raise their rates; they cannot charge more than what is paid to them by insurance carriers under contract, yet their practice costs continue to rise. Just recently, the federal government announced that Medicare physician reimbursement rates, unless averted by Congress, are slated to be cut by 5.1% in 2007.

As the saying goes, "All politics are local" – that statement could not be truer for the physicians in Northern Ohio. With organized medicine changing at an increasingly rapid pace, the AMC/NOMA leadership has been keenly aware of the need to provide its members with strong, regional representation. Our organization will continue to advocate on behalf of the doctors in this region. Although the increase in medical liability rates may have leveled off some in Ohio, we do not believe that the stabilization of medical liability rates is the panacea. That is why the AMC/NOMA was the driving organization behind SB 88 – the mandatory arbitration bill that is mentioned in your article. Some form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process must be found to handle medical liability matters. ADR would move cases through faster and at less cost. ADR works in other venues in the United States, and there is no reason it should not be tried in the medical liability arena.

Sincerely,

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President
The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland/Northern Ohio Medical Association