

## **NORTH CAROLINA MEDICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENT ADDRESSES HEALTH CARE REFORM**

Health care reform is quite the hot topic. Despite all the time and ink devoted to this issue, surveys show that most Americans do not understand the complexities of the problems or the solution. The goal is easy to comprehend; provide quality health care to as many citizens as possible while containing the costs. Whatever mechanisms are put into place to accomplish this goal, doctors and patients have a role to play.

My colleagues and I in the North Carolina Medical Society (NCMS), are taking responsibility for the crucial role that physicians and physician assistants play in providing health care. Our combined training and experience give us a unique perspective on how to keep people healthy as well as how to treat the sickest patients. We believe that we have the right combination of expertise, new technologies, incentives to encourage preventative care and proper resource utilization to nurture a healthier population and realize lower costs to the system. This requires us to change the way we work together – primary care doctors and specialists; mid-level providers and hospitals; social workers, nutritionists, wellness coaches all need to work hand in hand.

NCMS is hard at work to improve the health care system. Currently, we are collaborating with nearly 40 health care organizations in the Toward Accountable Care Consortium to provide education and resources necessary to health care professionals. To help our most vulnerable citizens, we have compiled a comprehensive plan for the NC Department of Health and Human Services to reform the state's Medicaid program through physician-led, value-driven health care models. Information about our plan and the consortium is available on our website ( [www.ncmedsoc.org](http://www.ncmedsoc.org) ). Neither Doctors nor their patients can predict the future, but we are leading by example to improve the system.

Patients, everyone is a patient at some point in their life; need to examine their health care assumptions. We cannot control our genetic make-up or every aspect of our future health, but we can control crucial elements. We can get regular check-ups and screening tests. We can put down the junk food and exercise. Each one of us has a personal responsibility to manage our own health. The emergency department is there for patient "emergencies" not routine care or flare-ups of chronic illnesses that can be treated by regular visits to a primary care physician. When individuals abuse the health care system, misuse emergency services, we all end up paying the price.

Staying healthy takes some effort and education, but compared to the enormous complexities of reforming our health care system, eating right and exercising is a simple step we can all take. A healthy population is the foundation of significant and lasting change for a better health care system.

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