

EDITORIAL

“Changing Times In American Medicine”

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Over the last year we have seen that the practice of medicine in America has changed drastically. We are all aware of the reasons these changes are taking place. The rising costs of health care in this country have put a great strain on the greatest utilizer of health care which is Uncle Sam. Thus, Medicare, which provides for the care of the elderly has shown astronomical rises over the last several years and if this were to continue, it would engulf the entire national budget by the late 1990's. Thus, Uncle Sam, recognizing this fact decided to do something about it, and we have now seen the cost containment programs that have been put forward in the form of DRG's and Peer Review Organizations.

We have also seen the advent of the Health Maintenance Organizations and private practice organizations. These are also attempts to increase competition, decrease escalating costs and address cost containment. Some standardization of the medical reimbursement is no doubt necessary for maximum utilization of health resources. However, this is being done at the expense of quality of care. This is very disheartening, and this is going to really adversely affect the high standard of medical care that has been available to us in this country for so many years.

Added to this problem is also the problem of oversupply of physicians. We already have been told off and on that American schools are producing a large number of graduates. In a recent article in the Wall Street Journal about the supply of physicians, it was stated that by 1990 certain states will be so oversupplied with doctors that they will be reporting unemployment amongst physicians. This is a very depressing scenario.

The issue of foreign medical graduates in this setting is indeed even more depressing. As pointed out in the letter published by the Society of Prevention of Discrimination Against Foreign Medical Graduates, Inc., which is published in this Journal and which I would urge all of you to read very carefully, it is very evident that the foreign medical graduates are becoming the targets of elimination in this severe competitive atmosphere. What can we all do about it? Of course, the answer is that we should become united. The organized American medicine has realized that the FMG's are dispersed all through the nation, and they are totally disorganized and temporarily totally oblivious of what is happening to their surroundings. Perhaps it will take some more time and more drastic setbacks and things may have to become worse and irreparable before foreign medical graduates will finally wake up.

In order to address this issue, the IMA has taken a leading role in trying to get foreign physicians together on July 4 - 6, 1986 at the 19th Annual Convention of the IMA in Washington, D.C.,** which is being held in conjunction with other organizations including the American College of International Physicians, The Association of Pakistani Physicians, etc. We urge you to please make a point to attend this convention so that you become aware of what is going on in organized medicine today and be cognizant of the steps that you may have to take in order to ensure that you may continue to practice medicine in this country.

** See enclosed details in this issue