

Healthcare In Crisis !!!

June 2003

Dear Patient:

Physicians are frustrated and fearful of losing their ability to practice in New Jersey. We have been telling Trenton about the effects of soaring medical liability insurance premiums, but the General Assembly Democrats and the Administration turn their backs on us. **Their inaction jeopardizes your healthcare!**

Over the last two years, insurers have sharply raised their rates for ALL physicians, anywhere from 75% - 200% — or more!!! High premiums have already cause New Jersey to lose more than 25% of its obstetricians and neurosurgeons. Many more physicians are retiring early, moving out of state or dropping specialties. Access to care is being threatened; not only to your current doctor, but also to specialists that you or your family may need in the future.

Physicians can't pass along insurance increases because of managed care and government restrictions. With staff salaries, benefits and other overhead also rising, it is increasingly difficult to meet financial requirements of a practice.

Juries are giving larger awards, which lead to increasing settlements and higher premiums. In 2002, the average New Jersey jury award was more than \$930,000. About 70% of jury awards and settlements are for non-economic (pain and suffering) damages. The plaintiff's attorney usually receives more than half of the total award in fees and expenses!

The Senate has passed a bill that allows a plaintiff to receive up to **\$1 million** in jury awards for pain and suffering. **Economic damages, which pay for healthcare costs, lost wages or potential earnings, would remain unlimited.** This bill contains other reforms that weed out frivolous lawsuits and improve patient safety to stabilize an out-of-control system.

The Assembly wants to give partial subsidies to certain "high-risk" physicians who receive large premium increases. This approach does nothing to address the cause of the crisis and only benefits a few physicians.

Physicians are rallying in Trenton and will continue to ask legislators to do the right things for our healthcare system. **But We Need Your Help!**

Please call 1-877-KEEP MDS.

Tell your Assembly representative to pass the Senate Version of A-50 because you want your doctor to take care of your family.

The Physicians Of New Jersey