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Policy Positions

Coordinated Care and Patient Safety

Allied health professionals such as physical therapists, chiropractors and podiatrists have a vital role to play in restoring and maintaining the health and well-being of patients. MOS closely monitors legislation for attempts to expand the scope of practice of these professionals beyond what their training and experience will safely allow.

Health Care Reform

Increasingly more Minnesotans lack access to comprehensive health care coverage, yet our patients' health and well being depends upon it. The MOS supports expanded access, removing cost barriers and standardizing quality measures. We are optimistic that recent state reform efforts will improve the health system in the state. To achieve complete reform and reduce unnecessary medical costs, legislators should also include medical liability reform to reduce the practice of defensive medicine.

Obesity

Orthopedic Surgeons see the obesity epidemic with a unique perspective. Obese children are at an increased risk to develop bowed legs and slippage of the proximal femoral growth plate. Overweight and obese patients of all ages face increase risk of complications from any surgical procedure. This is due to difficulties with anesthesia and intubation, more complex surgical approaches and wound closures, and challenges with post-operative mobilization.

Additionally, bones grow in size during childhood, gaining mass and strength. The amount of bone mass obtained while young determines skeletal health for the remainder of life. Childhood is critical for developing lifestyle habits that support good bone health.

The MOS encourages increased physical activity and better nutrition for children in particular. We support increased physical education in school and other programs targeting childhood obesity.

Aging Populations

More than 18 million Americans have low bone mass, placing them at risk for osteoporosis. The greatest cause of morbidity from low bone mass is an osteoporotic fracture, such as a hip fracture or a vertebral compression fracture. The MOS understands the importance of addressing bone health in aging populations. We advocate encouraging activities that strengthen the bone, such as exercise, and addressing, in some manner, osteoporosis in the setting of a fracture in the elderly.

Patient Access

State Health Programs Budget. The state is facing another significant budget shortfall. In past years, the Governor and Legislature have cut eligibility to programs that assist Minnesotans with obtaining affordable health coverage and raided the Health Care Access Fund. Proposals to raise the Provider Tax have also been considered. The MOS opposes continuing to balance the state budget on the back of health care services and health care providers and will vigorously fight any increase in the Provider Tax. Additionally, the MOS believes prior-authorization for specialty care is not appropriate and recent experience confirms it does not produce cost savings.

Injured Workers. Workers compensation represents an important and major component of the health care system. Nearly all orthopedic surgeons treat injured workers. However, providing care to injured workers is unlike caring for either Medicare or privately-insured patients. Treating workers' compensation patients is very labor and resource intensive. Administrative costs are higher due to the documentation and multiple third-party involvement. Claims submission is rarely accomplished electronically due to the documentation and supporting information required. The MOS will oppose any effort to restrict patient access or place the physician in a position in which their advocacy for a patient is compromised.

Surgery Centers. As consumers become more engaged in health care decision making, they are demanding maximum value for their precious health care dollar. Outpatient surgery centers are more specialized and as a result, can be the most convenient and cost-effective means to deliver specialty care. Efforts by large health care facilities to prohibit growth and development of these facilities only limit patient access and choice. The MOS opposes efforts limiting expansion, reimbursement or ownership of ambulatory surgery centers as well as efforts limiting patient access to critical diagnostic imaging tools.

Veterans Care

Returning veterans have unique health care needs, particularly within orthopaedics. Many of our members are veterans themselves and others are involved in caring for injuries sustained while serving the nation. To show support for veterans and their families, the MOS financially supports Fisher House which provides a home on the grounds of the Veterans Affairs medical center in Minneapolis.