Attorneys And Physicians Share Common Goals?

Skeptical Scalpel

Here is big news from the March 2013 issue [1] of the American College of Surgeons Bulletin.

The headline reads, "Attorneys and physicians share common goals."

The primary author is a medical liability plaintiff's lawyer from Washington, DC.

The article states that surgeons and liability attorneys want similar things for patients. "Both surgeons and patient attorneys are committed to patient well-being and the relief of patient suffering." Really? So for liability attorneys, it's not about the money? I see; it's about "relief of patient suffering."

"Surgeons belong to an ancient and esteemed profession; every day, surgeons cure disease, relieve pain, and make lives better. Attorneys see themselves as members of another healing profession, helping to restore to broken lives some measure of independence and dignity." I did not know that attorneys were members of another healing profession. I've never heard it put that way before. I mistakenly assumed it might be about the money.

"When injured patients are treated fairly in the legal system, it helps restore their trust by facilitating communication between the clinician and the patient and providing clarity about a potential error and how it occurred." So the elaborate process that goes along with a medical liability lawsuit is all about communication and restoring trust? And I thought it was about the money.

"Liability cases and fair compensation are means of honoring patients. Because they draw attention to patient suffering and physician error, they help ensure that the opportunity to prevent harm to another patient will not be lost or wasted." It's good to know that plaintiff's attorneys are in business for the purpose of honoring patients. Silly, cynical me. I thought it was about the money.

In the U.S., the “deny and defend” response from physicians is quite common. This reaction may be due in part to the perverse and dangerous incentives that characterize the American medical system. For instance, the fee-for-service model provides a disincentive for less-qualified surgeons to refer patients to trained specialists." According to Mr. Malone, doctors' denying and defending lawsuits is the real problem. And that's because of the fee-for-service payment system? Sorry, I don't follow that line of reasoning.

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