

"Tort reform would improve medical care"

The recent comments by Timothy I. MacMaster, attorney at law, disparaging the need for medical malpractice tort reform ("Gathering Place," Star-Bulletin, April 26) can be summarized. Basically, his message is: Doctors are plentiful and they make lots of money compared to the general public. He asks, "Why should patients and their families have their constitutionally guaranteed rights to trial by jury taken away in order to enable cardiologists to make more money?"

He misses the importance of trying to balance the cost of continuing a medical practice in managed care situations, like prepaid insurance companies and Medicare, that prevent costs from being passed on to the consumer. Physicians are facing a continued reduction of reimbursement for their services with increasing cost of medical malpractice insurance. Therefore, many doctors are reducing their Medicare and high-risk patients, and that is the truth of the matter.

We were not given the salaries of the plaintiff attorneys to compare with the physicians listed. Nevertheless, there are two suggestions that come to mind. Since physicians are having to reduce their charges to patients to provide medical service, would it not be fair to ask attorneys to take lower contingency fees (rather than the customary 30 percent) so that more money could be passed on to their deserving clients in the settlement of cases? Furthermore, if the attorneys in the United States could accept what is practiced in several other democratic countries, laws could be passed so that the plaintiff could pay all the costs if the case was proved to be without merit. This latter condition would discourage the abundant "nuisance suits" that are settled merely because it is more expensive for the insurance company to fight the cases even if they are not justified.

Malcolm R. Ing MD
Kapiolani Medical Center

Editor's Note:

This Letter to the Editor appeared in the Honolulu Star Bulletin, Editorial page, A 12, on Friday May 6, 2005.

Re: The Honolulu Professional Program

Dear Norm,

We have recently opened an outpatient chemical dependency treatment program for professionals. There are limited addiction treatment facilities in Honolulu and none that address the particular needs of the professional. Though chemical dependency as a disease has signs and symptoms common to all, professionals tend to use a similar set of defences that make treatment together more beneficial.

We offer a full range of outpatient treatment services, including initial evaluation, Intensive Outpatient Treatment, family treatment & aftercare as well as treatment of co-occurring disorders.

Gerald McKenna, MD is a Harvard trained addictionist and psychiatrist with experience in various treatment settings, having worked in Boston, Los Angeles and Hawaii. Michael Foley has a master in social work and a doctor of psychology degree, in addition to a doctor of Ministry. He has established treatment centers in the United States and

the United Kingdom. William Perri, PhD is a psychologist who provides psychological testing for our clients. John Keenan has a PsyD, PhD is trained as a neuropsychologist and has extensive clinical experience in outpatient & residential chemical dependence treatment settings.

Together, our team will provide the kind of professional treatment you wish for your professional patients with addictive disorders. We provide convenient evening hours in our office on South King Street in the First Interstate Building.

Please contact our staff for further information. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Gerald J. McKenna MD
Medical Director

Michael E. Foley MSW, PsyD,
Min
Program Director

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