



■ THE BACKLASH AGAINST MANAGED CARE

To the Editor: I agree with the point of your editorial on the effect of the backlash to managed care (*Cleve Clin J Med* 1997; 64:7–8). Certainly, legislation to regulate managed care organizations in a piecemeal fashion may hamper the very goals of reducing waste and unnecessary expense. On the other hand, I am concerned that the enthusiasm for managed care has led to a headlong rush to embrace it, without the proper study of what makes successful HMOs work, and how to safeguard patients.

The structures of many of the managed care insurers in the Sacramento area, which is “highly penetrated,” are complex and layered with bureaucracy. Physicians I’ve spoken with have been highly critical of micromanagement of simple clinical decisions and referrals.

One gynecologist closed his practice when he found out that as a “primary care provider,” he was expected to administer allergy shots to his patients instead of referring them to an allergist!

One company reviews procedure authorization requests once a week. This adds delay in getting approval for tests, adds inconvenience, and wastes money for both the patient and the office personnel (who have to later try to reach the patient and schedule the test).

One insurer met with a group of physicians and said that they could help us do our job better by telling us which cardiologists on their provider lists performed services with the least expense. When I asked if they could

provide provider-specific outcomes, adjusted for severity of illness, I was told, “Oh, we figure that you know their practice quality.” I could go on and on.

Many of the innovative approaches used by managed care could certainly be applied outside of a managed care setting. Clinical guidelines, benchmarking, and clinical pathways are all part of an appropriate concern to produce effective results. Introducing these methods into our current system should be looked at, too.

You may be right, “...we as a nation have collectively if not unanimously moved in the direction of managed care...”

I say that it’s certainly not unanimous!

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■ THE NEW CLEVELAND CLINIC JOURNAL OF MEDICINE

To the Editor: I just wanted to let you know that I find the *Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine* one of the most clinically useful and readable medical journals I use.

The articles tend to be about relevant issues, and this allows the reader to draw his own conclusions based on the data and opinions expressed. Keep up the good work.

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