



George M. Lange, MD, FACP

Guest Editorial

Society committed to maintaining stable liability environment

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The Wisconsin Medical Society received news in early December about the potential merger of PIC Wisconsin with ProAssurance Corporation. As we assessed the situation, one thing remained clear: the Society's commitment to maintaining a stable medical liability climate in Wisconsin.

From the beginning, the Wisconsin Medical Society has led the way in creating and maintaining a favorable liability environment. Consider our history:

- In 1975, the Society helped form the Patients Compensation Fund (known today as the Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund). This unique fund has allowed Wisconsin to keep its medical liability rates relatively stable because the private insurance market is assured that it will not have to pay more than \$1 million per judgment. In 2003, the Governor's state budget proposed taking \$200 million from the Fund. The 2005 budget proposed a similar raid, but skillful political organizing and Society communications prevented either proposal from getting passed, despite extremely difficult budget circumstances for state government.
- In 1986, the Society helped es-

tablish PIC Wisconsin to ensure the availability of affordable medical liability insurance for Wisconsin physicians.

- In 1995, the Society was a driving force behind tort reform,

revenue stream for the Society over the years. That revenue has allowed us to pursue our mission. For example, it helped provide needed economic resources for efforts such as tort reform. It has also allowed

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which established caps on non-economic damages in medical liability cases. And although that cap was declared unconstitutional in July, the Society is working tirelessly to establish a new cap that will withstand future constitutional challenge.

Together, these 3 elements add up to a liability climate that has long been one of the best in the nation. As we developed our new strategic plan during the last year, we never lost our commitment to physicians. As physicians, we understand that access to health care and a stable environment go hand in hand.

Now, we must examine what the merger of PIC Wisconsin and ProAssurance means for the Society. In addition to the Society's original objective of ensuring that Wisconsin physicians have access to reasonable medical liability insurance, PIC Wisconsin has created a significant

us to avoid increasing membership dues for 7 years. The benefit that the Society and its members have gained from the relationship with PIC has never caused the Society to lose its focus or weaken its commitment to maintaining a healthy, stable medical liability environment.

As we move forward, it is important that we work to build a relationship that will help ensure our mutual continued success, that we work together to create services to help physicians and their staffs reduce the risk of malpractice claims, and that we ensure that the interests of policyholders are protected.

With change, there is always some uncertainty. But as we evaluate how PIC's merger with ProAssurance will affect the Society and its members, be assured that one thing will remain unchanged—our focus on ensuring that patients in Wisconsin have access to quality, affordable health care.

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