

Right man, right time for reform

Society President Steve Bergin, MD, should be lauded for his audacity to take on the issue of health care system reform.

Addressing the problem of health care reform has not been influenced significantly by the previous piecemeal approach. Global goals must be established and pursued; this is my interpretation of Dr Bergin's approach.

We all know that one of the basic problems of the present health care system is that we have not empowered the individual to take personal responsibility for their own health. The health care industry has not found a way to get this done and—in spite of the great technical advances in emergency care, surgery, and diagnostic technology—chronic diseases have become epidemic. It is hard to avoid the criticism of the high cost of present day medical care, the increasing chronic disease epidemic, and patient dissatisfaction with treatment of their symptoms, with little attention paid to patient questions about their general health and wellness.

As a physician in practice since 1947, I have also been made aware of physician dissatisfaction and “burnout.” The primary care physi-

cian often finds that the practice of medicine “just isn't fun anymore.” My guess is that present emphasis on treatment of symptoms is not as satisfying as the practice of integrative medicine, which we don't do because of a lack of training and a feeling of not being competent in the subject.

Doctor Bergin may just be the right man at the right time to change the system, which I think will be done by integrating general medicine with other known health-promoting concepts such as the new science of cellular nutrition, and other alternative care modalities. Integrating our medical practices will legitimize the health and wellness concept and get the patient back as a player in the system.

Wisconsin's School of Medicine and Public Health will be a great asset for Dr Bergin in accomplishing his goal. It is one of our nation's few medical schools training physician specialists in integrative medicine. It is my belief that this is the answer to changing our course and building a healthier and more effective medical system. It will also be the vehicle for changing our medical education so that doctors will learn the skills and competence to integrate our medical care system and to bring the fun and satisfaction back to patient care.

Walt Meyer, MD, CMD

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