

NMA ACTIVITIES

NATIONAL MEDICAL POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Edward C. Mazique, MD
Washington, DC

The National Medical Political Action Committee (NMPAC) was organized in 1979 when the NMA convened in Detroit. In the ensuing five years much has been accomplished, but not enough. Our membership is at a low ebb, and our dollars are few. Currently, there are only five state PACs organized. NMPAC is in need of members and dollars. Until this is accomplished, it is impossible to carry out its commitments.

The primary purpose of NMPAC is to provide an opportunity for its membership and their spouses to play an active role in the political arena. Today, quality medical care and the freedom of physicians to participate in the art of the profession and enjoy the benefits in the preservation and restoration of life are seriously jeopardized by governmental regulations and corporate takeovers.

Medicine is definitely in the political arena. It is imperative for physicians to become politically involved to prevent such chaos and disaster. Many new phrases, words, and newly formed organizations bearing acronyms have soundly shaken the fundamental concepts of quality medical care. Physicians were not taught these concepts in medical school, but rather academic, research, and

clinical medicine.

Such phrases as PPDs, DRGs, PPS, HMO, PLOs, peer review, and anti-trust laws are only a few of the newer innovations that have made for change and challenge. Health care is now in the marketplace, and an enormous segment of it is already on the "Big Board" on Wall Street. In short, the physician and his wares are quoted daily with the Dow Jones. The bottom line is money and cost containment.

The product that the physician has to sell is himself, embodied in good judgment and laced with high ethical and moral standards to care for the poor, the sick, the elderly, and the needy. These noble virtues are now threatened, to be taken away and reclassified under new concepts by business managers and health entrepreneurs according to a recent survey.

Medicare's DRGs (Diagnosis Related Groups) have led to shortages in hospital staffs, quality detentions, and premature discharges. Many hospitals have closed since the program's inception. Four major corporations—National Medical Enterprise, American Hospital International, Humana, and the Hospital Corporation of America—are purchasing community and teaching hospitals and converting them into hospitals for profit.

The care of the poor, the elderly, infants, and minorities is seriously imperiled. It is estimated that there are approximately 28.5 mil-

lion individuals uninsured. US Representative Fortney H. Stark, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health, recently stated that "he would like to expand Medicare to cover uninsured but that was not in the reality of politics."

Political decisions and legislation are changing the delivery of health care. The practice of Medicare is being stifled by the onslaught of political thrust on major legislative bodies. Medical voices must be heard in the political arena to stem the tide of human sacrifice, such as the elderly, infants, the poor, minorities and the needy. Suggestions must come from providers of health care to channel new ideas and concepts into a network of information to decrease infant mortality, increase longevity, and provide health access for the poor and the needy.

Join NMPAC and become personally involved in the political process. Become a part of the PAC with your membership dues and personal participation. This must be done on the local, state, and national levels. Become a political partner for good health and quality medical care.

Remember, the power of politics lies not only in employment, housing, food and clothing, but these necessities of life are compatible with good health and access of the rejected to basic quality medical care. Invest and become involved in human resources.

Dr. Mazique is Chairman of NMPAC and Past President of the National Medical Association. Requests for reprints should be addressed to Dr. Edward C. Mazique, 908 Kennedy Street, NW, Washington, DC 20011.