



Minnesota Academy of Otolaryngology

2010 Legislative Priorities

Patient Access

State Health Programs Budget. Minnesota again faces a significant budget deficit. The MAO opposes balancing the state budget on the back of health care programs and providers in the state through cuts to health care programs, increases in the provider tax, raiding the health care access fund and instituting benefit restrictions for specialty care.

We believe benefit restrictions and utilization management should be carefully weighed because often the policies result in delayed care for patients and increased administrative costs for providers. The MAO believes prior authorization does not result in significant savings; rather, that it adds to health care costs by placing additional administrative burden on an already stressed system and delays care for patients.

Surgery Centers. As consumers become more engaged in health care decision making, they are demanding maximum value for their precious health care dollar. Outpatient surgery centers are more specialized and as a result, can be the most convenient and cost-effective means to deliver specialty care. Efforts by large health care facilities to prohibit growth and development of these facilities only limit patient access and choice. The MAO opposes efforts limiting expansion, reimbursement or ownership of ambulatory surgery centers, imaging facilities, and radiation oncology facilities.

Medical Liability Reform

The MAO supports comprehensive medical liability reform, including reasonable limits on non-economic damages, both at the state and federal levels. High medical liability insurance costs have contributed to decreased patient access to care, particularly in those states that have not enacted meaningful medical liability reform and for high-risk specialties. Due to these costs, medical students are avoiding training in high-risk specialties and practicing physicians are avoiding the performance of medically necessary high-risk procedures. Research compiled by the American Medical Association documented that caps on non-economic damages lead to improved patient access to care, lower medical liability premiums, and lower healthcare costs.

Patient Safety

Audiologists and speech pathologists continue to try to expand their scope of practice beyond what is appropriate based on their training, thereby confusing patients and jeopardizing patient outcomes. The MAO opposes efforts by these groups and will fight to protect patient safety.

Obesity

Obesity is a global epidemic, curtailing quality of life, diminishing health and driving up health care costs. The MAO is particularly concerned about the rate of obesity in children, causing numerous health issues including sleep apnea. Overweight children are at increased risk for sleep apnea. Of the 37 percent of children who are considered overweight, 25 percent of them likely have sleeping difficulties that may include sleep apnea. Studies have shown that after three months of exercise, the number of children at risk for sleep apnea dropped by 50 percent.