

UPDATE

neurosurgery

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Neurosurgeons Oppose Limiting Patient Access and Government Interference in Medical Care *House Health Care Reform Bill Jeopardizes Future of American Medicine*

WASHINGTON, DC – The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) announced their opposition to H.R. 3200, the “America’s Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009,” currently under consideration by the House of Representatives.

“America’s neurosurgeons strongly support improving our nation’s healthcare system by ensuring insurance coverage for all our citizens. Unfortunately, as it is currently constructed, this bill goes far beyond what is necessary to fix what is broken with our healthcare system,” stated Troy M. Tippet, MD, President of the AANS. “Rather than pursuing a carefully targeted set of reforms, the House bill could amount to a complete government takeover of healthcare.”

P. David Adelson, MD, President of the CNS echoed these sentiments, stating, “Clearly, we want to ensure that every patient has insurance and timely access to quality healthcare provided by the doctor of his or her choice. However, this legislation will ultimately limit patient choice, will put the government between the doctor and the patient, interfering with patient care decisions, and because of its tremendous cost – immediately and in the future – will be a burden to all Americans.”

Specifically, the AANS and CNS have concerns about the following key elements of the legislation:

- Ultimately, the public health insurance option will lead to a single-payer, government run healthcare system;
- Due to its high price-tag, the health system envisioned is unsustainable;
- Under the public health insurance option, the government is empowered to implement rules that would restrict patients’ choice of physician and limit timely access to quality specialty care;
- The bill fails to recognize the looming workforce shortages in surgery by requiring that all unused medical residency training slots be allocated to primary care and placing the emphasis on national workforce policy on primary care, to the exclusion of surgical and other specialty care;
- The bill inappropriately expands the government’s involvement in determining the quality of medical care and residency training programs;
- The bill permits the government to arbitrarily reduce reimbursement for valuable, life-saving specialty care for elderly patients, threatening treatment options;
- Patient-centered healthcare is threatened by provisions related to comparative effectiveness research, changes to office-based imaging and curtailing the development of physician-owned specialty hospitals; and
- The bill potentially stifles medical innovation and valuable continuing medical education programs.

In addition, the House bill fails to include an essential element – medical liability reform. “Numerous studies have demonstrated that effective federal medical liability reforms will significantly lower healthcare costs by reducing defensive medicine and eliminating frivolous lawsuits from the system,” Dr. Tippet noted. “Congress cannot call this health care reform without addressing this problem.”

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The AANS and CNS look forward to working with Congress to make changes in the legislation to ensure that we enact meaningful health system reform, without dismantling the current system, which works well for most Americans.

*The **American Association of Neurological Surgeons** (AANS), founded in 1931, and the **Congress of Neurological Surgeons** (CNS), founded in 1951, are the two largest scientific and educational associations for neurosurgical professionals in the world. These groups represent approximately 7,600 neurosurgeons worldwide. Neurological surgery is the medical specialty concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of disorders that affect the entire nervous system, including the spinal column, spinal cord, brain and peripheral nerves.*

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