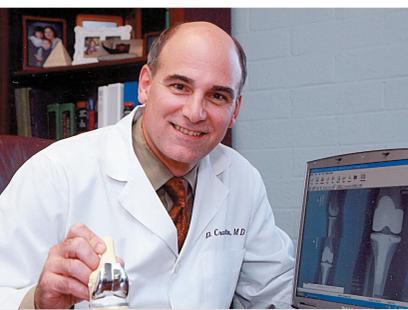


Restoring the Practice of Medicine to Those Who Practice Medicine

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Q&A

United Physicians and Surgeons of America hosting solutions-based summit to unite physicians with one voice



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Author, "A Doctor's Declaration
of Independence"

Let My Doctor Practice is a movement founded by the United Physicians and Surgeons of America to restore the voice of the doctor to the practice of medicine. To bring light to this issue, the organization is hosting an educational summit entitled, "A National Grand Rounds on the State of American Medicine" from July 20-26, 2015 in Keystone, CO. To find out more, Medical Economics sat down with Dr. Daniel Craviotto, President of the United Physicians and Surgeons of America and author of "A Doctor's Declaration of Independence."

Medical Economics: What is the single most threatening thing for doctors in today's healthcare landscape?

Daniel Craviotto: I think it's the idea that bureaucrats not in the medical profession are promoting and implementing policies that affect the practice of medicine and the delivery of healthcare. There is this concern that these policies will enter a territory that, for the most part, should be governed and managed by those in the medical profession.

Scott: Why has this become such an important issue in today's healthcare circles?

Daniel Craviotto: It's because of the desire by those who are involved in healthcare policy. They recognize that healthcare costs are going up – we all do – and so what is the best way to address it?

Some of these mandates that have come out of Washington have really affected the practice of medicine. And, in the last two years especially, they have led to a lot of angst and anxiety by physicians wondering, "How did we lose control, and why is this happening now?"

Medical Economics: Why do you feel that doctors have lost their voice?

Daniel Craviotto: I think there are a number of reasons.

First and foremost, medicine and doctors have become fragmented due to specialization and sub-specialization. The average individual physician in the trenches really does not have a voice in this debate.

The second reason is that there is no single organization that represents doctors and speaks for doctors as a whole. The American Medical Association (AMA) used to be that organization. For instance, in the 1950s, 75 percent of all physicians were AMA members.

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Currently, that number is probably somewhere between 15 percent and 20 percent.

The third cause is that physicians are so busy with our medical practices and in taking care of patients that we don't have much time for policy issues. If you listen to doctors in group conversations or on social media, you will often hear them say, "We've let them do this to us. We gave away our power. And if we want to change medicine in a different way, we have to work together to take it back."

A fourth reason why doctors have lost their voice is that physicians admittedly are hard to organize. As one physician said, "Thinking independently is an advantage when you are a caregiver, but it is a disadvantage when you want to present a united front."

I think it is really important for the individual physician to communicate what is happening in our field to his or her patients, to the public and to his or her local news media outlets. We have not done that well in the past as a group. We don't want the discussion to be inflammatory, but the public needs to understand what is happening in healthcare as a result of some of recent changes, how the practice of medicine has been altered, and how it is having an impact in the examination room.

Medical Economics: How has the Meaningful Use program resulted in the degradation of the medical record, and what impact has that had on individual physicians?

Daniel Craviotto: The Meaningful Use program came out of the 2009 Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH), which was part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The intent of HITECH was to promote the adoption and meaningful use of health information technology.

The goal of HITECH was to develop ways to use electronic health records (EHRs) in meaningful ways that would achieve significant improvements. That's an admirable goal, but what

happened is there was this unprecedented pressure to rapidly adopt EHRs before they were ready, which increased the potential for EHR-related safety hazards and created a lot of frustration among physician users.

As a consequence of "note bloat", it is difficult to locate the pertinent information in the health record. This is just one example of how medical records have become degraded. There are many others. The computer and EHRs are here to stay and are a valuable tool but they need to be improved to allow for more efficiency and productivity by physicians.

Medical Economics: United Physicians and Surgeons is hosting a summit and interactive webcast entitled "A National Grand Rounds of the State of American Medicine" from July 20-26 in Keystone, CO. Why is your organization hosting this summit, and what are some of its goals?

Daniel Craviotto: Our organization believes strongly that we need to mobilize and engage physicians to restore the voice of the doctor to the practice of medicine. Our mission is to restore the practice of medicine to those who actually practice medicine. We feel as a group that the best way to start that process is with this conference. This will be a conference where physicians can come together and not only outline the critical issues, but more importantly begin to offer solutions.

We'll have leaders in direct patient care and information technology who will share their thoughts on how doctors can regain some of their autonomy to practice how they want and need to. One of the best parts is that the content will be available both in person at the conference as well as on demand either live or after the summit's conclusion.

For more information about the United Physicians and Surgeons of America, and to register for their July conference, visit www.letmydoctorpractice.org

Let My Doctor Practice is a movement founded by **United Physicians and Surgeons of America (UPSA)** to restore the voice of the doctor to the practice of medicine. We believe in the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship, the autonomy to practice medicine without restraint imposed by overreaching government and corporate entities, and, above all, that patient care and safety should never be compromised. Together, we will unite our voices to restore the practice of medicine to those who actually practice medicine.

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