



## *Tucson Heart Surgeons*

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July 2004

Dear Patient,

As most of you know by now there is a very black cloud hanging over Arizona. This is not a rain cloud, but a storm of unimaginable magnitude that will likely change the type and quality of healthcare that you and your families receive. As the cost of liability suit damage awards continues to increase across the nation, our liability premiums have skyrocketed. Our premiums will likely increase 100% in the next month.

Because of these increases, and the hostile environment placed upon your surgeons by the legal community, there are a number of changes which have begun to occur. Over the past several years, it has become increasingly difficult for us to attract quality physicians to the area. This is because of decreasing reimbursements from Medicare along with the commercial insurance companies and soaring insurance premiums. More and more often we are now "turning down" the higher risk patients we would have operated upon several years ago.

The insurance companies are beginning to refuse to cover surgeons who care for high risk or very ill patients. One of the surgeons on the Northwest side has had to leave his practice after being refused insurance coverage. The obstetricians on the Northwest side are steadily leaving that portion of their practice where they deliver babies or they are leaving Arizona entirely.

Soon, you may not have a surgeon to care for you. The *Tucson Heart Surgeons* are committed to providing the best care available to you and your families. It may be that we will have to only operate on low risk patients or leave Arizona as well. **We need your support.** The Governor, who is a trial lawyer, and your elected representatives on the State level as well as the Federal level need to hear from you. They need to know that you are unhappy with what they, your representatives, have allowed to happen. There is a clause in the State Constitution which forbids the capping of the amount of punitive or non-medical damages that can be paid. This perpetuates the present situation of allowing for excessive and outrageous monetary judgments against health care providers and hospitals.

Physician's reimbursements for health care services are fixed by the government. The yearly excessive increases in costs for liability insurance coverage cannot be "covered" or passed on. Therefore, physicians' "costs of doing business" are skyrocketing and many are finding this unsustainable. Many physicians are retiring, relocating to other states or quitting the practice of medicine for other avocations.

This situation must change and only **you**, the voters of this state, have the mandate to change it. Please write, call or email your legislators and the Governor. The life you save may be someone you love or even your own.

For your convenience we have attached a list of Arizona State Legislators and Congressional Delegates. This issue needs to be addressed. Thank You!

Sincerely,

*Tucson Heart Surgeons*