



LOS ANGELES COUNTY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
PHYSICIAN LEADERSHIP AND EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH CARE



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Southern California Physician Magazine Exposes Burdens Doctors Face When Prescribing Treatment *Insurers, HMO's; Hinder Access to Patient Medications*

Los Angeles - The Los Angeles County Medical Association (LACMA) along with the *Southern California Physician* (SCP) magazine hosted a press conference in Los Angeles to launch the March edition of SCP magazine.

The feature story, "A Bitter Pill" exposes the burdens and hassles physicians face when prescribing medications. Conflicts exist currently at all levels of the drug prescribing system. Health insurers, pharmacy benefit managers and health maintenance organizations currently use their "power of the purse" to interfere in the doctor-patient relationship. This alarming trend is even more critical now as our economy stalls and insurers get more pressure to cut costs; as people lose jobs they are less able to pay for medications even if they have Medicare / Medical / private insurance.

Highlighted in the article are the four most common practices used to encumber patient care; therapeutic and generic drug substitution, in which a health plan just stops covering a patient's current medication in favor of another; fail-first policies that allow a patient to be used as a human guinea pig before they receive the proper treatment; drug formulary elimination ending all together the current plan of care a patient is receiving; and attempts to incentivize physicians financially through programs that require prescribing certain drugs to meet the insurer's bottom line.

The Los Angeles County Medical Association (LACMA) is a professional association representing physicians in all modes of practice and specialties, including solo practitioners, small and large-groups, hospital-based physicians, students, interns and residents. For 136 years, the organization has been at the forefront of current medicine, advocating for excellence in healthcare delivery and supporting physicians and their patients in the areas of healthcare policy, government relations, community relations and in the courts. Through these advocacy efforts LACMA's physician leadership and staff strive toward a common purpose -- to enhance the professionalism and clinical autonomy of physicians so that they may best advocate for their patients and the health of the people of Los Angeles.

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