



Attention: New Jersey Patients

Access to Care Eroding in New Jersey

The stories and statistics below serve to illustrate the severity of the medical liability crisis in New Jersey. They are only a sample of the thousands of patients and doctors suffering the consequences of frivolous lawsuits and skyrocketing medical liability costs across America.

- Sixty-eight percent of New Jersey physicians have made "some change" in their practice due to the availability and affordability of professional liability insurance. Such changes include retiring, relocating, decreasing gynecologic surgical procedures, no longer performing major gynecologic surgery, stopping obstetrics practice, decreasing the number of deliveries, and decreasing the amount of high-risk obstetric care. (According to a two-question survey conducted by ACOG in August 2002)
- Potentially, 17,982 pregnant women in New Jersey will annually be forced to find new physicians to provide their obstetric care as a result of the doctor exodus resulting from skyrocketing medical liability costs, thus interrupting continuity of care and disrupting long established physician-patient relationships upon which these patients have come to rely. (According to the 1999 ACOG Survey on Professional Liability)
- Dr. John A. Heim, a cardiovascular thoracic surgeon from **Cherry Hill**, was forced to close his practice and move when his medical liability coverage increased from \$190,000 this year and from \$80,000 the year before. "I spent four years in medical school, eight years training after that, 10 years in the community doing expert surgery, and it really doesn't mean anything because if I don't get affordable medical malpractice insurance I [can't practice]," he said. (Asbury Park Press, March 20, 2003)
- An eight-physician ophthalmology practice that treats premature babies born with retinopathy - a condition that can lead to blindness -- will no longer offer the procedure due to the high-risk and liability exposure. (Medical Society of New Jersey, Oct. 24, 2002)
- Nearly 27% of New Jersey hospitals have been forced to increase payments to find physicians who are willing to cover the Emergency Department. Physicians are increasingly reluctant to take on such assignments because of the greater liability exposure. (New Jersey Hospital Association, Jan. 28, 2003)

- A multi-physician practice in **Teaneck**, NJ, was forced to layoff employees and reduce the number of deliveries it performed because of professional liability insurance premium increases of more than 120%. (Bergen Record, May 22, 2002)
- In January 2002, there were 85 practicing neurosurgeons in the state. A little more than a year later, an estimated 20 have been forced to stop practicing. **Warren County** residents, including its 200-bed hospital, saw its only two neurosurgeons leave in September 2002. The closest neurosurgery center is now more than one hour away for those residents. (Medical Society of New Jersey)
- In **Middlesex County**, a second-generation, 50-year surgical practice is closing in the wake of insurance premiums increasing from \$34,000 per physician to \$96,000 per physician. (Medical Society of New Jersey)
- In July 2002, the Childbirth Center in **Englewood** closed due to rising liability insurance rates for obstetric services. The Center lost its coverage when the Princeton Insurance Company pulled out. Obtaining insurance through a new company would have cost the Childbirth Center \$325,000 per year compared to \$30,000 with Princeton Insurance Company. (ACOG, June 17, 2003)
- MBS Insurance Services of **Denville**, one of New Jersey's largest medical liability insurance brokers, estimates that approximately 300 to 400 of the state's doctors cannot get insurance at any price. (ACOG, June 17, 2003)
- In early 2003, medical liability insurance premiums for OB/Gyns rose to between \$61,814 and \$91,988 - an increase of 17.95% from the 2002 rates. (Telephone survey of medical liability carriers - January and February 2003)
- A New Jersey Hospital Association survey shows that 100% of New Jersey hospitals saw an increase in liability insurance premiums in 2002, with the average hospital experiencing a 50% increase. Liability insurance has increased 203% from 1999. (New Jersey Hospital Association, Jan. 29, 2003)
- Dr. Robert S. Rigolosi, President of the New Jersey Medical Society, said jury awards averaged more than \$925,000 per case in NJ in 2002, for a total of \$48 million. (ACOG, June 17, 2003)
- The average cost per medical malpractice claim in NJ rose from about \$37,000 in 1983 to about \$63,000 in 1989, then stayed relatively flat until 1996. Since then, the average cost per claim has increased to about \$120,000 in 2002. (ACOG, June 17, 2003)
- 80% of New Jersey residents are "concerned" or "very concerned" that the medical liability crisis may prevent them from seeing the physician of their choice. 73% believe the current personal injury system is broken and needs to be reformed. (Research 2000, May 2003)