



**For Immediate Release**

**May 7, 2008**

**As Hospital Advocates Lobby Capitol Hill Today~  
AMA URGES CONGRESS TO SAVE SPECIALTY HOSPITALS FOR PATIENTS**

WASHINGTON – Today, the hospital industry is in Washington to lobby members of Congress – and high on their agenda is an assault on physician-owned hospitals that provide patients with a high quality choice in where to receive health care. The American Medical Association (AMA) calls on Congress to stand with America’s patients and continue to oppose efforts by the hospital industry to eliminate competition.

“The hospital industry’s campaign to eliminate physician-owned hospitals has nothing to do with patients, and everything to do with eliminating competition,” said AMA Immediate Past-President William G. Plested III, M.D. “Studies show that the quality of care patients receive at specialty hospitals is high, and the patients like the choice in care, so there’s simply no good reason to try and get rid of them.”

“Just last month, the hospital industry tried to slip a provision to ban physician-owned hospitals into the Farm Bill at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour,” said Dr. Plested. “These anti-competitive efforts are wrong – legislation that will harm patients’ choice and access to care should not be passed, and it certainly should not be slipped into unrelated legislation.”

The AMA and other supporters of specialty hospitals are ready and willing to discuss the merits of these hospitals, but its opponents are resorting to smoke and mirrors to state their case. The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) recently rebuked the hospital industry in a letter for misrepresenting the findings of an HHS study on specialty hospitals.

“If the hospital industry succeeds in getting Congress to effectively ban physician-owned hospitals, they’ll be reducing access to care for the patients who rely on them,” said Dr. Plested. “Plain and simple – this is nothing more than a power grab by the hospital industry.”

The patients who rely on the award-winning Indiana Orthopaedic Hospital (IOH), which specializes in muscle, joint and bone care and complex surgical procedures, would be forced to go to other hospitals and may have their care delayed. This specialty hospital – which Health Grades ranked first for spinal surgery in Indiana – would also be prohibited from increasing the number of patient beds or operating rooms, preventing the hospital from growing to meet their communities’ needs. This is despite the fact that a study of Medicare patients undergoing joint replacement surgery in specialty orthopaedic hospitals had a 50 percent lower risk of adverse outcomes than patients in a comparison group of general hospitals.

In Washington state, the Wenatchee Valley Medical Center (WVMC) has been serving patients in a remote, rural area that spans over 12,000 miles for nearly 70 years. The physician owners of the hospital, who each own less than 1 percent of WVMC, wrote to their members of Congress last July and said that if this legislation was enacted, “we foresee the likely closure of WVMC and our outlying facilities in the next few years.” Last year, WVMC served 150,000 patients, and 60 percent of their patients are in Medicare or Medicaid. In addition to being an indispensable source for primary care and trauma services, it is the only provider of 16 specialty services in the region – including care for cancer and heart disease.

The issue of specialty hospitals has been studied over and over again – and the findings show high levels of quality care and patient satisfaction. Government studies have found fewer complications, like infections and hip fractures, at specialty cardiac hospitals, and that specialty hospitals provide more net community benefits through uncompensated care and taxes than not-for-profit competitors as a share of total revenues.

“The physicians of America are committed to providing patients with high quality care, and improving the health care system through innovations like specialty hospitals,” said Dr. Plested. “We urge Congress to reject the power grab by the hospital industry and continue to allow high quality facilities such as those in Indiana and Washington state to continue to care for patients.”

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**About the American Medical Association**

*The American Medical Association helps doctors help patients by uniting physicians nationwide to work on the most important professional and public health issues. Working together, the AMA's quarter of a million physician and medical student members are playing an active role in shaping the future of medicine. For more information on the AMA, please visit [www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org).*