

Resolution on Preventing Restriction of Scope of Practice

WHEREAS the AAFP Policy on Family Practice states that the AAFP “maintains responsibility for determining the philosophy, content and scope of family practice,” and this policy further states that this scope of practice “encompasses all ages, both sexes, each organ system and every disease entity,” and

WHEREAS the AAFP Policy on Family Physicians describes the physicians of this specialty as “best qualified to serve as each patient’s advocate in all health-related matters, including appropriate use of consultants, health services, and community resources,” and

WHEREAS the AAFP statement on Health Plans advises “Family Physicians should be permitted to contract, provide and be reimbursed for services within the full scope of their training and experience,” and

WHEREAS the tendency exists for family physicians to limit their practices because of the prohibitive costs of professional liability insurance premiums and providing services with low reimbursement rates. This tendency has important implications for health care in underserved communities. A study by the Arizona Academy of Family Practice found that prohibitively high malpractice premiums have led family physicians to stop performing a wide range of services including obstetrics, general abdominal procedures and surgical and radiological procedures [J Fam Prac Jul 23(1):55-8], and

WHEREAS the AAFP Policy on Professional Liability states that the AAFP will continue to work on the professional medical liability problem as one of its highest priorities. This includes setting the goal to be an “advocate for family physicians regarding any mechanism for affordable premiums,” and the goal to “support chapters by serving as a resource center to provide information on evolving solutions in other areas,” and

WHEREAS the New York State Academy Congress of Delegates passed Resolution 04-11 in 2004 to work with representatives of medical liability insurers in New York State & the Commissioner of Insurance to determine a fair and equitable policy for professional liability coverage in regard to practices and procedures including medication abortion, and

WHEREAS insurance issues are determined by each state, now therefore be it

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RESOLVED that the AAFP will encourage all state chapters to work with local insurers and regulators to establish fair and equitable professional liability insurance rates and health insurance reimbursement rates for family practice physicians who provide a range of services within their scope of practice, including medication and early aspiration abortion, among other services often limited by prohibitive costs of liability coverage and inadequate reimbursement by health plans, and be it further

RESOLVED that the national AAFP will support state chapter efforts to resolve issues of insurers restricting scope of practice, and serve as a resource for advice and information sharing on solutions as they appear in individual states. This will affirm that it is the AAFP, and not insurers, that determines and will continue to determine the scope of practice for family physicians and definition of family practice. Scope of practice will be determined by training and experience, and not by providers of professional liability insurance or health insurance.