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**ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS POINT TO SOARING MALPRACTICE CLAIMS;
CALL FOR ADDITIONAL REFORMS TO CONTROL COSTS**

HARRISBURG (March 24, 2005) – The Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society says record level of malpractice claims payouts in 2004 could mean another round of skyrocketing medical liability insurance premiums this year.

The U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) stated that medical malpractice claims against physicians in Pennsylvania jumped in 2004 to nearly \$450 million.

Insurance companies and other underwriters in Pennsylvania reported a 13.5 percent rise in payments for malpractice claims against physicians in 2004 at \$448 million over payments of \$394.5 million the previous year

Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society (POS) President Paul Christopher Metzger, M.D. noted that the General Assembly, former Governor Mark Schweiker and Governor Ed Rendell have made great strides toward medical liability reform through Act 13, Venue reform and MCARE abatement, but the HRSA report shows that Pennsylvania continues to be a hostile medical liability environment.

“We are not out of the woods yet in terms of bringing balance to our medical liability system so that doctors can spend more time with patients and less time in the courtroom,” Metzger said. “We’re going to be right back where we were in 2002 when surgeons – especially high-risk specialty surgeons – faced steep increases in their liability insurance premiums and many had to make a choice about whether or not to treat patients.”

Metzger explained that doctors are not able to pass along this increase in costs to their customers, such as what happens in other industries.

“We are facing a real squeeze in terms of decreasing reimbursements from insurers and increasing costs due to medical liability premiums,” Metzger said. “Doctors are left with the difficult choices of limiting services to patients or delaying investment in new technology because of this squeeze.”

POS is a professional medical specialty organization representing more than 900 orthopaedic surgeons across Pennsylvania. For more information visit the POS website at www.paorthosociety.org.

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