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Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society colleague:

I am writing to enlist your help.

Increasing over the past year, we have been listening to countless politicians, policy wonks and media talking heads describe their solutions for the rising cost of healthcare. They plan to halt the rising costs, or at least “bend the cost curve”, by creating a single payer, or cooperatives, or rooting out fraud, or capping fees, or maybe even rationing care at some point in the future. However, those of us on the front lines of patient care recognize a potential source of wasted resources that is rarely if ever discussed: the cost of defensive medicine.

A recent PriceWaterhouseCoopers study entitled *The price of excess: identifying waste in healthcare spending* reported that “wasteful spending in the health system has been calculated at up to \$1.2 trillion of the \$2.2 trillion spent in the United States, more than half of all health spending. Defensive medicine, such as redundant, inappropriate or unnecessary tests and procedures, was identified as the biggest area of excess.” Yet despite this huge potential source of savings, there is very little research or hard data on defensive medicine.

With the support of the leadership of the Pennsylvania Orthopaedic Society, we would like to learn more about the cost of defensive medicine in our state. We are launching a study to determine the percentage of orthopaedic imaging in Pennsylvania that is ordered for defensive purposes. We recognize that orthopaedic imaging is but a tiny percentage of all defensive medicine; however, there is so little data about defensive medicine, any contribution we can make to this area will be progress.

Here is how you can help: simply report which imaging studies you order (over the course of a month, week, or even just a busy clinic day) are truly “essential to care”. The denominator will be all the studies your order. We will work with medical economic experts to analyze the data and extrapolate it to a larger understanding of defensive medicine.

All data is completely anonymous. We will de-indentify all data as it arrives. It cannot ever be associated with any individual orthopaedist. Participation is voluntary. If you decide not take part or if you change your mind there will be no penalties or loss of any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. By completing and returning the survey, you indicate your consent to participate in this research study.

We ask you to do the following:

- Answer the preliminary questions on the accompanying data sheet
- For each image ordered for consecutive patients (rounds can also be included), simply circle the modality and write the body part imaged (we need some detail to calculate cost information). Check the box next to each image if it applies to the indication for the order.
- When you are finished, please return the datasheet in the stamped, self-addressed envelope. **Your information is confidential; no name should be written on the sheet.** When you return the self addressed envelope, your return address will be immediately destroyed.

If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at (215)590-1527.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Flynn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John M. (Jack) Flynn, M.D.
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