

A matter of perspective

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So, who do you think causes more waste in health care - doctors or lawyers?

No really, this is not a trick question.

Alright. Maybe it is for some people.

Certainly President Obama might find this question a real stumper. He is the guy, after all, who believes that doctors cut off appendages just to make money.

At least that is what he said in a speech.

Now it is true that the speech did not get wide circulation. If you did not happen to see our president accuse doctors of slicing off body parts in quest of the big payday, don't feel bad. Most people missed it.

Sure, it's true. Had it been anyone but this president then the entire world would have seen the clip.

Several times.

At least that is the way it used to be when a president said something really, really stupid.

But the rules have changed with this president. When he says bonehead things, like accusing doctors of stealing millions and millions from taxpayers with the unscrupulous use of a scalpel, the media just don't pay much attention.

But here's what happened.

What Obama said was that some doctors simply cut feet off instead of treating diabetes because amputations are so lucrative. According to our President, doctors are paid "\$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000 and immediately the surgeon is reimbursed."

This is stupid on so many fronts it's difficult to decide where to start.

Immediately?

Good grief. There is very little that happens fast when the government is involved. Anyone working in the industry will tell you it can take a long, long time to get paid by Medicare. But what most folks don't know is that even after Medicare does pay for a particular procedure that doesn't mean the hospital can actually keep the money.

Nah. What the enlightened bureaucrats in the federal government have decided is a great way to save money is to take it back.

No fib.

This happens.

Months n sometimes longer n after a doctor has cared for a Medicare patient, a contractor hired by the government will review the paperwork amassed during the treatment of the patient. If the contractor detects that the paperwork is not right n the government will take back the money it paid for the treatment.

That's if the paperwork is not right.

Never mind the patient.

Even if the doctor did the right thing it may not be right. The only thing that matters is the paperwork. Who would ever have guessed that with a government program?

One other thing that oughta' curl your toenails.

The contractor hired by the government only gets paid if he finds something ♦wrong' with the paperwork. That's right, the contractor works on a commission of what he takes back from doctors and hospitals. Anyone care to guess whether this system tilts one way?

But we're way off track.

The real issue is greedy doctors sawing off perfectly good body parts.

But despite what President Obama said, doctors don't get paid \$50,000 to amputate feet. Furthermore, if there is a rash of doctors out there dismembering live bodies, it just seems like someone would have heard about it by now.

Someone other than President Obama that is.

But then maybe we just aren't looking. It all could all be just a matter of perspective. From Obama's perspective, doctors are the problem.

A thought that does not encourage much confidence in any reform proposal he might support. - DAN HAMMES is publisher of this newspaper.