

A Nation at War

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2007 DCMS Philip H. Gilbert Young Physician Leadership Award Recipient

We are a Nation at War. The war has many participants and is fought on many fronts. The most obvious of the Wars is the **Global War on Terror**. Our Great Nation has Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Coast Guardsmen in harm's way, defending our Freedom in far off places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Korea, Egypt, and Italy.

There is also a **War over the medical liability crisis** fought in the legislature and courtrooms. As frivolous claims and outrageous settlements drive the cost of malpractice insurance up, force physicians from practice and unfairly raise operating expenses of all physicians – only the lawyers benefit.



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Another **War is being fought in every physician's office**. The Medicare "Unsustainable" Growth Formula forces annual 11th hour legislative sessions to pass stop-gap measures temporizing the impending disaster. One of the greatest debacles in legislative history is the Un-Sustainable Growth Formula. Basically, it states that to

sustain the growth of spending, we need to cut funding every year. As reimbursements for hospitals and pharmaceuticals go up, physician reimbursement goes down.

The **fourth War** fought in America is **between physicians and the Third Party Payors** who, through buy-outs and mergers, have an unfair advantage in the marketplace when they dictate reimbursement rates with solo docs and small groups. As more health insurance companies merge, they push out the smaller market and become monopolistic monstrosities. New physicians know all too well that insurance companies increasingly offer "take it or leave it" contracts at rates as low as 80% of Medicare.

I am writing to enlist your service in the Wars being fought around the world and in our back yard. I implore you to be a part of the solution. Consider where you can make your mark and help patients by helping doctors. This is Your Medical Society. You and I are here to serve each other so we can better serve our patients and our community.

One way to be involved is to become a mentor. Invite a resident or young physician to the next Duval County Medical Society event you attend. Young Physicians and residents need mentors to succeed and to understand how they can

contribute. Inspire them to get involved as you have. Take a resident to lunch or invite that young physician to a committee meeting.

Next, support our troops. If you have neighbors who have served or perhaps have a loved one overseas, please pick up the phone or knock on a door. Just say, "Thank you."

I ask each of you to take up your figurative arms and lend a hand to the War Effort. Armed with our positions in the community and the trust of our patients, we can make a difference. We can show support for our Troops defending our freedom, encourage patients to contact their legislators and Third Party Payors, and help our neighbors understand the struggles we face. As physician leaders, we can mentor the Premedical Students, Medical Students, Residents, and Young Physicians. We can open our homes and offices to become places of mentorship and guidance.

In closing, I'd like to share a story about a wise man walking along a beach. He sees a little boy running back and forth from the high tide line to the surf, and back again. As he gets closer, he sees the boy is among a mass of starfishes on the beach. The boy frantically, but ever so gently, picks up one starfish at a time, races to the water's edge and places him gently into the water. He turns and repeats his process. "Little boy, what are you doing?" He answers, "Sir, these starfish washed up in last night's storm. I am saving them." Amused at the futility he advises, "Son, you can't possibly save all of them. Go play."

The boy politely nods then runs up the beach. Soon, he sees the boy repeating his frantic routine of ferrying starfish. Before he has a chance to share the wisdom of age and maturity, he hears the little boy, "Saved that one!" Saved that one!" "Saved THAT one!"

Marveling at the boy's focus and determination, he too, returns a starfish to the water. The man saw that even alone we can make a difference, and together we can change the world.

Please take up your arms in the Wars Raging in our Great Nation and make a difference. Make a mark. Together We Are Stronger.

God Bless The United States of America.

Editor's Note: Dr. Hashey received the first Philip H. Gilbert Young Physician Leadership Award at the 2007 Annual Meeting. (See "First Coast Medical News", p.49) He also spent July-Nov. 2006 in Afghanistan serving with the United States Army Reserve as the Flight Surgeon for Task Force Talon. (See NEFM, Vol. 57, No.4, pp. 52-53). This month Dr. Hashey began a solo Family Medicine practice in the Baymeadows and 9A area.