

### **Control of American dermatopathology through laboratory capitation**

*To the Editor:* I read with great interest Drs. LeBoit and Cockerell's position paper on the control of American dermatopathology through laboratory capitation (J AM ACAD DERMATOL 1994;31:98-100). They have stated in eloquent detail the necessary effects of the current and future managed care system on the practice of dermatopathology if the present trend continues. For this effort they are to be commended.

But they did not go far enough. They did not address the fundamental cause driving the rise of managed care. What is this cause? It is that the government, through current legislation and the threat of new legislation, has the medical and insurance industries second-guessing what the final outcome will be. The medical and insurance industries are following President Clinton's lead because of his pro-managed care stand (so-called "managed competition"). They are banking on being able to position themselves favorably with the government so that they will be able to control the contracts that the government approves. Is it any wonder that dermatopathology as a subspecialty and dermatopathologists as medical practitioners and academicians are lost in this process?

Believe it or not, however, managed care, as such, is not the fundamental problem befalling dermatopathologists throughout America; it is only an effect. The deeper problem is that the managed care industry is counting on government protection at the expense of other types of health care delivery systems, such as fee-for-service, indemnity insurance, and/or catastrophic insurance.

The answer to this problem is not more government controls to provide special protection for dermatopathol-

ogy. The answer is deregulation of business, including the medical and insurance industries, with government protection of individual rights rather than the "rights" of groups. When a government protects the rights of these or any other persons, each person manages his/her own care, often by controlling directly his/her own cash flow without the involvement of third parties.

Only one system of government holds value for the individual and regards the individual as the proper focus of a culture. That system is capitalism, which means a system of individual political freedom, private property, free trade, and the protection of individual rights.<sup>1</sup> Capitalism will not exclude any persons from forming or joining managed care systems if they are so inclined, but neither it will force them into such systems. Finally, capitalism alone would afford a rich network of independent physicians who, competing in a voluntary, free market, would offer an affordable price structure for excellent services, including those provided by pathologists genuinely interested in diseases of the skin.

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## REFERENCE

1. Rand A. What is capitalism? In: Capitalism: the unknown ideal. New York: New American Library, 1967:11-34.