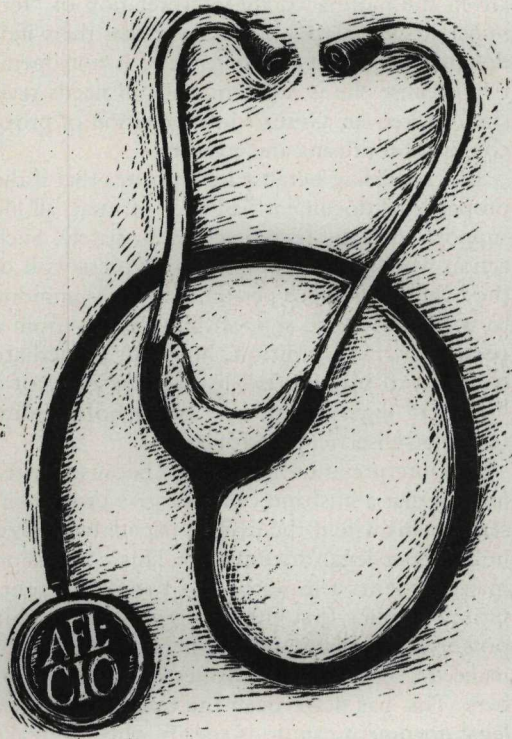


TRENDS & Ideas

PHYSICIANS

Docs in Unions?



Sim Gellman

A new labor union—the AFL-CIO-affiliated Federation of Physicians and Dentists—is beginning to attract U.S. doctors, according to the Associated Press. The union, which is based in Florida but has branches in Chicago, Philadelphia, El Paso, and San Antonio, has so far signed up about 1,000 members nationwide.

Robert C. Osborne, MD, an anesthesiologist who leads the union drive in Tucson, AZ, says members are seeking more favorable contracts from the managed care organizations that employ them. They especially want to regain control of

treatment decisions, which they say is being lost to those organizations. “The frustration I see among doctors about this is unbelievable—the difficulty of providing good patient care in this environment,” he says.

Osborne agrees, however, that falling physician incomes may also be a reason doctors are enlisting in the union. And, according to an article in *Health Affairs*, there is evidence that physicians’ incomes are indeed down.

The article cites a recent study indicating that, after rising steadily for some years, the average physician’s

Contrary to popular belief, cost is not the only basis on which employers are choosing a managed care plan for their employees. Multiple factors—including access to care, premium costs, care management, and employee satisfaction with providers—play into the final decision, according to the Managed Care Value survey conducted by Minneapolis-based William M. Mercer, Inc.

In a survey of top benefits executives at 48 Midwest organizations, respondents were asked to rank seven factors according to

MANAGED CARE

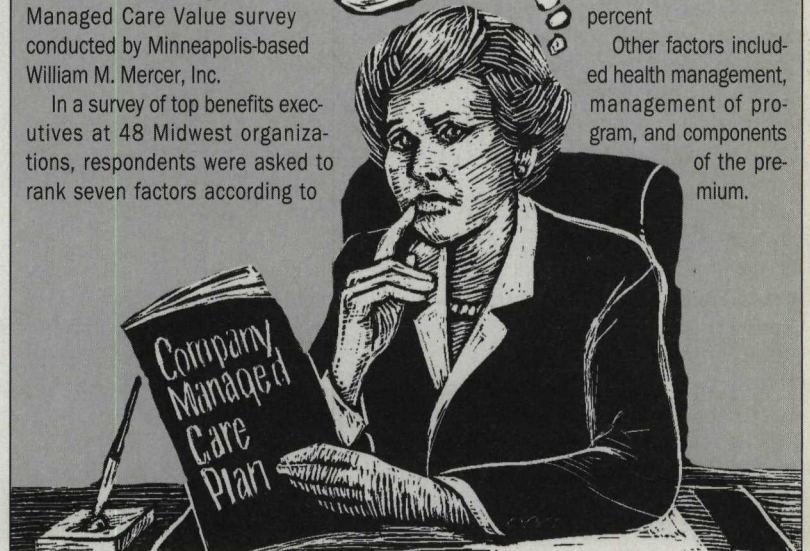
Decisions, Decisions . . . With Managed Care Plans, It's More Than Cost



the weight they carry in making a care plan decision. The top factors contributing to the decision were ranked as follows:

- Access to care, 21 percent
- Premium amount, 20 percent
- Care management, 17 percent
- Satisfaction with the care provider, 16 percent

Other factors included health management, management of program, and components of the premium.



income dropped about 4 percent in 1994. According to the study, by Carol Simon and Patrician Born, specialists such as general surgeons, gynecologists, and psychiatrists saw an average 5.3 percent drop in their incomes. The incomes of primary care physicians, on the other

hand, fell only 1.7 percent. Simon and Born note that the sharpest income drops occurred in California and Massachusetts, states with high levels of managed care. Simon and Born caution that the 1994 figures on doctor incomes may not indicate a trend. Meanwhile, Jane

Orient, MD, a veteran Tucson internist, opposes the idea of a union for physicians. But she also refuses to have any links with managed care companies. As a result, she says, she has had to take on work as a writer, editor, and administrator “to pay the bills.”

HOLISTIC ENVIRONMENT

High Tech Takes a Low Profile

Increasingly, healthcare facilities are incorporating their ideas about holistic care into new constructions and remodeling projects. Just as providers are evaluating service from clients' perspectives, they are giving more consideration than ever before to clients' needs for privacy and a soothing environment.

In Rochester, NY, the DeWolff Partnership, an

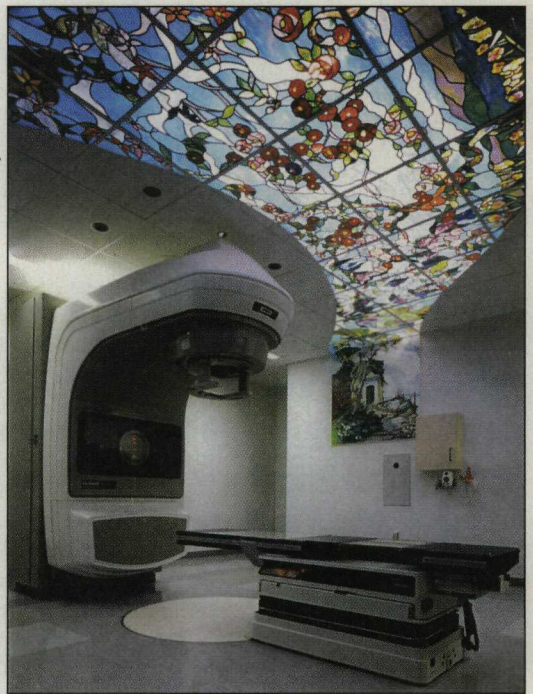
architectural design firm, has come up with an innovative design that increases privacy for nursing home residents while offering everyone an outside view.

The firm's "Z-Room" provides privacy, accessibility, and window viewing using a staggered-bed layout for each patient area in a semiprivate room. The room itself is irregularly shaped, making efficient use of

square footage while giving residents a more homelike environment. Based on the typical nursing unit of 40 beds occupying approximately 18,000 square feet, the Z-Room will successfully meet all New York health code requirements.

In the midst of inner-city New Haven, CT, the Hospital of Saint Raphael is creating oases of calm for patients, their families, and staff. With the recent construction of a new cancer care center, the hospital had the opportunity to merge the latest technology with an environment that would contribute to holistic healing.

The new cancer center and garden are bordered by the existing hospital building on three sides. A separate corridor allows people to enter the main hospital

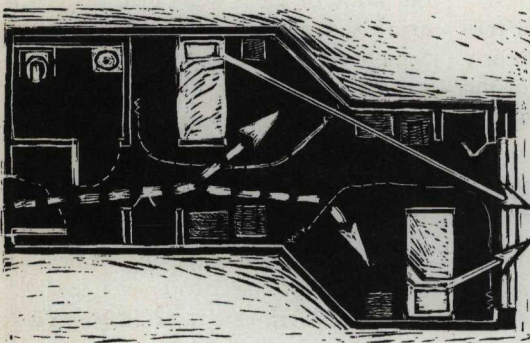


lobby without having to pass through the cancer center. The design also allows for future construction of additional floors above the cancer center while preserving the building's function and aesthetic appeal.

Private and semiprivate treatment rooms are large enough to accommodate both patients and their family members. In the radiation rooms, stained glass ceilings

(see photo) provide a relaxing, soothing atmosphere for patients who are undergoing treatment.

The waiting rooms look out on the garden, adding a pastoral view conducive to recovery. The garden's brick wall screens an adjoining building from sight on the approach to the cancer center. For those inside the garden, the wall hides nearby parking lots from view.



BLUE COLLAR LIFE

Wanted: Educated Workers

Many U.S. manufacturing companies are seeking "smarter" workers these days, write Stephen Baker, Larry Armstrong, and Susan Jackson in *Business Week*. Such companies help their factory workers acquire both technological know-how (e.g., using computers) and leadership skills (e.g., building teams). This training gives those firms a more productive labor force and, at the same time, allows them to cut costs by laying off managers.

Large companies especially are giving workers training in such areas as quality and statistical analysis, group decision making, and team building, according to the University of California's Center for Effective Organizations. And the share of



workers with some college education has jumped from 17 percent to 25 percent in the past decade, says the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The advanced training of factory workers is, in fact, often done on a college campus. In North Haven, CT, for example, General Motors has donated \$2 million worth of equipment and 75 demonstration cars to Gateway Community-Technical College so that its automotive students can learn to work on GM products. Partnerships like this help both the community and the employer.

All this is radically changing the nature of American factory work—but without necessarily relieving the traditional pressures of the assembly line. Workers who used to depend on their muscles now find they have to stretch their brains if they want to advance. Many will have to do it just to keep their jobs.