VERMONT MEDICAL SOCIETY RESOLUTION

VMS Support for Efforts to Minimize Cost Burden to Patients

Adopted on October 25, 2008

WHEREAS, Distances to work and medical care are often long and public transportation options are limited for most Vermonters; and

WHEREAS, The increase in gas prices approaching $4.00/gallon has seriously limited the ability of Vermonters to travel to work, medical and other appointments; and

WHEREAS, The average cost of heating oil has risen very significantly in the last 12 months; and

WHEREAS, Food prices continue to increase along with fuel prices; and

WHEREAS, Older Vermonters are often on fixed incomes and are particularly vulnerable to unexpected increases in their expenses; and

WHEREAS, This financial crisis is forcing Vermonters to choose between eating well and heating their homes and both seeking treatment for illness and paying for all aspects of their medical treatment, including very high cost of medications; and

WHEREAS, Only four out of 14 Vermont counties have an adequate supply of primary care physicians and all other areas are experiencing serious or moderate shortages; and

WHEREAS, Telephone or e-mail consultations may be appropriate when patients find it difficult to drive to a physician's office; however, physicians are concerned that diagnosing and treating patients solely by telephone could result in misdiagnosis and give rise to increased risk of malpractice liability; and

WHEREAS, Delays in medical treatment and failure to take necessary medications result in more severe and costly illness; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the VMS urges physicians and their staff to ask at-risk patients if they are eating well and heating their homes; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the VMS coordinate with local, state, and federal organizations (such as the Vermont Food and Fuel Partnership, Vermont 211, Agency of Human Services and the Area Health Education Centers) to provide practices with information for their patients regarding heating oil assistance, public transportation and other available resources; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the VMS work with lawmakers, agencies and payers to increase the options available to health care practitioners for treating patients, including but not limited to use of telephone consultations and email communications as a means of reducing the cost of travel where appropriate, recognizing that payers should reimburse practitioners for their work.